

Wild

SURVEYS:

CROSS-COUNTRY SKIS
HEADTORCHES

AUSTRALIA'S WILDERNESS ADVENTURE MAGAZINE

Winter
(July-September) 1998, no 69
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BUSHWALKING:

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BLUE MOUNTAINS
THREE PEAKS



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PAST**

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ISSN 1030-469X

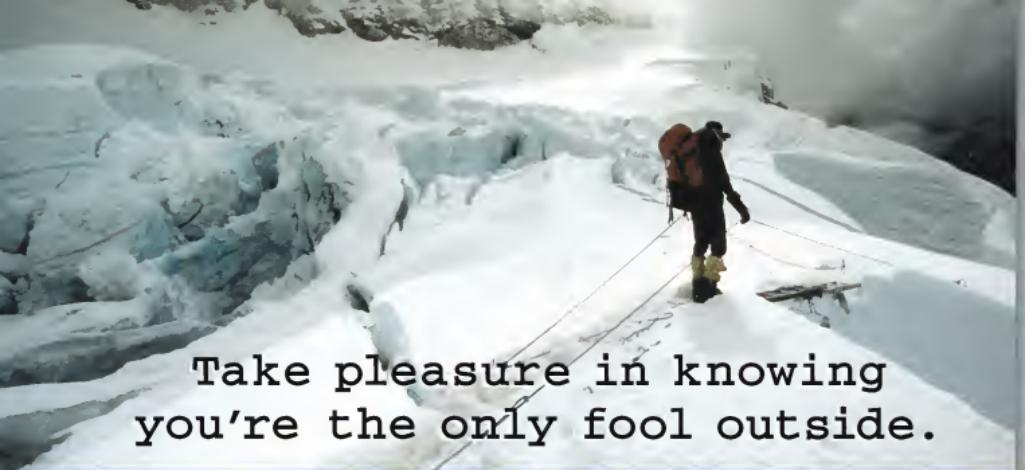
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Established 1981

42



Feathertop and Beyond

Glenn van der Kriijff recalls the experiences of two near-novices on one of Victoria's finest alpine walks

48



The Three Peaks

Andy Macqueen reviews the history of this major bushwalking challenge in the Blue Mountains for its 40th anniversary

53



Walking a Fine Line

Maps show the Victoria-New South Wales border from the headwaters of the Murray to the coast as a simple line. On the ground it's a very different story. By Peter Langtree

58



My Waterproof Jacket Leaks!

Roger Caffin considers what might be the problem

60



To Log or Not to Log

Why the Greens should rethink their policy on forests, by Patrick Moore
Why the Greens' policy on forests should be supported, by Geoff Law

Winter
July-September 1998
Issue 69
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THE
CONSERVATION
SOCIETY
ALLIANCE
The Outdoors Industry
Giving Back to the Outdoors

DEPARTMENTS

- 3 Editorial Ethiopia: forget the clichés
- 9 Wildfire Letters to the Editor
- 15 Wild Information Including Australian caving success
- 17 Wild Diary What's on, and when
- 23 Green Pages Including the effects of land clearing
- 25 Action Box What you can do for the wild environment
- 33 The Wild Life Movable feasts, by Quentin Chester
- 38 Outdoor Skills Out for the long haul, by Rob Blakers
- 64 Folio Light on the land, by Simon Carter
- 68 Track Notes Skiing the Bogong High Plains, by Martin Meyer
- 74 Track Notes—Easier Walking The far south coast of NSW, by Marc Ainsworth
- 81 Wild Gear Survey Touring and XCD skis, by Michael Hampton
- 89 Equipment Including headlamp survey
- 93 Trix Snow-camping comfort
- 97 Reviews Including a major history of the YHA
- 104 Wild Shot Hard-luck story

WARNING

The activities covered in this magazine are dangerous. Undertaking them without proper training, experience, skill, regard to safety, and equipment could result in serious injury or death.

Cover Katrina Bryce, left, and Jo Hearne in front of the Cathedrals, Mt Buffalo, Victoria. Greg Tasse/

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Murray River. Photo by Anthony Spillman

Ethiopia

Forget the clichés—Club Med it ain't, but it's not what you think

Ethiopia! For a holiday? 'You can't be serious.'

That was the general reaction when my wife Sue and I told friends that we planned to spend January trekking Ethiopia's Simien Mountains.

Desert, famine, poverty, disease and warfare come to mind when Ethiopia is mentioned. While my own views had obviously been modified shortly before departure for Africa, I have to admit that such impressions at least coloured what I imagined we'd encounter.

The first jolt to my prejudices came thousands of kilometres before we arrived in Ethiopia. In Bangkok, to be precise. Not a relaxed flier at the best of times, I had been none too comfortable with the idea that we were obliged to fly Ethiopian Airlines from that city. The fertile imagination of bug-eyed friends—and of myself—had pictured us flying in a plane that made an FJ Holden look state of the art, and crewed by tribal primitives. The opposite was the case, in both respects.

I experienced the second jolt also before we reached Ethiopia: over the capital city Addis Ababa. The relatively small city is in high, fertile, hilly country which, viewed from the air, reminded me of Canberra.

I was surprised to learn that Ethiopia's 55 million people are scattered throughout an area about as large as France and Spain combined. No wonder, then, that Addis Ababa is a small, uncrowded and attractive place without the traffic, smog and high-rise problems associated with most cities. Although we travelled extensively, particularly in the north, we did not see another city—as opposed to a town. Nor did we see any desert. There are deserts, but they account for only a small proportion of the country.

Even before we arrived in the Simien Mountains which rise to over 4000 metres in northern Ethiopia near the Eritrean border, it was apparent that much of the country is hilly if not mountainous, relatively fertile and sparsely populated. But it was the people who both charmed and

humbled us. We were immediately won by their warmth and friendliness.

In our terms, Ethiopians are poor. Very poor. However, the warmth with which they accepted us was not diminished by the obvious disparity in wealth between us. Indeed, these respectful people were curi-

children—often bent under a back-breaking burden of a pitcher of water or a load of hay—would sprint up steep hills just to greet us cheerfully as we sweated under our almost empty day packs.

On the whole, their possessions consist of a few basics. Comforts are even fewer. To obtain a single container of water often entails hours of toil, and fuel is scarce. As for medical facilities in such places? Forget it!

Other surprising aspects of Ethiopia include the richness of its history, which is so evident today in its own Christian Church with its spectacular sites, customs and rituals—even its own calendar—dating back as far as any Christian Church in the world. Extraordinary archaeological sites continue to be found or extended every year, with excavation of some of the biggest and most significant still in progress. It's not everywhere you can wander the corridors of the Queen of Sheba's palace with hardly another tourist in sight!

Wrecked tanks and artillery are a common sight in the north, as are bombed bridges, bullet-riddled buildings and destroyed planes at airports, because Ethiopia's recent history has been replete with warfare. But that seems to be a thing of the past. There is stable government that appears to enjoy unusually widespread support. The first democratic elections were held recently. A general mood prevails among Ethiopians that now they want to pull together to rebuild their country and have it realise its undisputed potential.

From a strictly 'Wild' perspective, Ethiopia proved to be all I had hoped for and more. While not a true 'wilderness experience', for primitive farming can be seen almost everywhere but on the highest peaks and ridges, the landscape is more spectacular than I had dreamt. Massive limestone escarpments plunge into purplish depths and myriad, spectacular spires and other inaccessible summits float on the haze. And there are few other trekkers, let alone signs of commercialism or the inevitable, resultant environmental scars.



Meeting the locals, near Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Chris Baxter

ous why we, who were so clearly rich and well educated, would want to visit them. Generally, they were very happy to be photographed, and we saw far less begging and forceful hawking than is common in developing countries.

The children are particularly appealing. Hungry for the education many are now beginning to receive, they sought to practise their English with us and to show us their school exercise books. Dressed in attire that often resembles rags rather than clothes, and living in the characteristic, round mud-and-stick huts, most Ethiopians display an inner strength and a peaceful, almost joyous, fortitude unknown on a wide scale to us in the developed world.

Many of the Ethiopians we met live in small, remote, rural villages. Their fitness and toughness amazed us. Working barefoot on rocky ground and at altitude, small

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Please ensure that submissions are accompanied by an envelope and sufficient postage. Names and addresses should be written on disks, manuscripts and photos. While every care is taken, no responsibility is accepted for material submitted. Articles represent the views of the authors, and not necessarily those of the publisher.

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At the end of our stay Sue and I visited World Vision's Adama Project, south of Addis Ababa. For some years Wild Publications has given a proportion of its revenue to environmental and other projects, including those of World Vision in Ethiopia. I made a point of going to see how our money was being used 'on the ground'. In the course of our brief visit we saw what would bring hope, and pride, to the heart of every *Wild* reader: new schools full of vibrant and joyful young people excited about learning; basic medical and veterinary clinics; irrigated trees groaning with fruit where only a few years ago there had been arid land; extensive reforestation; and new water bores. (The last-named save many women the back-breaking task of carrying water for several hours every day. Some daily water-carries take ten hours for the return trip!) Through an interpreter I spoke to a number of the local people about the project. Everywhere the response was the same—praise, gratitude and optimism.

I had already come to the conclusion that far from being an economic 'basket case', there is considerable cause for optimism for Ethiopia and its people. There and then at Adama, Sue and I signed up to sponsor a local child through her education and I resolved to do more through *Wild* to support the outstanding work already being achieved to bring liberation from poverty, true independence and lasting peace to Ethiopia. I cannot think of a better way to do this than through the well-established work of World Vision there. I urge you to join me. World Vision can be contacted at GPO Box 9944 in your capital city.

WINNERS

A special thanks to the many readers who completed and submitted readership surveys and answered all 47 questions. We promised gift packages (each containing a Mt Feather-top poster, a set of *Wild* greeting cards, and a *Classic New South Wales Walks* guidebook) to those who sent in the first 20 replies we received (proportionally allocated by State). In addition, we promised that the 100th respondent would receive a Whippet Mountain crag chair, and the 200th respondent a Therm-a-Rest packTOWL. The following are the winners: E Kusilek, Cabramatta, NSW; R Edwards, Murrumbateman, NSW; Michael Clough, Phillip, ACT; Adam Dogger, North Richmond, NSW; Geoff Rothfield, Gilmore, ACT; M Morgan, Milsons Point, NSW; Paul Ellis, Sanctuary Point, NSW; M O'Reilly, Ferntree Gully, Vic; J Ainley, Clayton, Vic; James Eagles, Belgrave Heights, Vic; Evan Stampe, Mentone, Vic; Chris Moore, Lower Templestowe, Vic; Ben Tyler, Traralgon, Vic; T Court, North Ipswich, Qld; Brad Gooda, Acacia Ridge, Qld; Greg Roberts, Adelaide, SA; Robyn Holmes, Fern Tree, Tas; Ann McCauley, Subiaco, WA; Noel Verweirder, Wanneroo, WA; Christina Hancock, Glenalda, SA; Nicole Dennis, Rochedale South, Qld; and W Carter, Lismore Heights, NSW.

Chris Baxter

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Health hazards

Last rites for first aid article?



Just a couple of small comments about the story on first aid on page 36 of *Wild* no 68.

To start with, it worries me to see someone with a broken ankle being carried out of the bush in this way. The ankle looks to be strapped up fine, but if I were this casualty I would have preferred to be wrapped up in something warm and made comfortable until trained rescue personnel arrived. This may help to prevent unnecessary pain and suffering, there would be less chance of more damage to the ankle, less chance of shock and it would help to monitor the casualty properly.

I don't want to be critical of that rescue because I don't know the circumstances, such as the distances they were moving him or whether these people are accredited rescue workers or if they even have to be accredited in Victoria. But untrained rescues take place much too often. It is worth mentioning that people not accredited with the State Rescue Board in New South Wales or unqualified first aiders can be made liable if more injury or death is caused by unnecessarily moving an injured casualty.

By now, you have probably guessed that I am a member of an accredited rescue organisation, the State Emergency Service...

Rod Whalan
Oberon, NSW

In her article 'A gram of prevention' (*Wild* no 68), Margot Hurrell asks us to consider a scenario of summer on the Main Range with nice summer weather changing into rain and a 'white-out' without pre-existing snow on the ground. What can I say? I'd like to see that!

Ken Green
Berridale, NSW

The suggestion in Margot Hurrell's article in *Wild* no 68, 'A gram of prevention', to know areas where mobile phones work is excellent. I have tried to identify these spots from Telstra without any success and, despite repeated requests, have not been

able to obtain locations of transmitters (to triangulate high spots that may receive a signal). Park rangers have been more helpful. Would you have that information or would readers like to contribute local knowledge which you could collate and publish?

wonder if we sometimes forget the old-fashioned suggestions about survival.

Perhaps we develop a sense of immortality with all the modern hi-tech gear...

When reading Clark's article, I recalled a white-water expedition undertaken many years ago with Outward Bound. Their rule was simple—every paddler had a length of clear 1-2 centimetre tubing around his or her waist at all times while on the water...

The whole group had to be able to stay under water for two minutes using the tube for breathing before we set off on the first day...

It may not be sexy and it may seem silly, but even one tube carried by a party may save much trauma.

After considering this brush with death, I browsed *Wild* until I reached page 45—are those tents pitched in a river bed? I think my Scoutmaster said something about that in 1962 when he said...

Great mag, guys! Had better hide it in my desk and get back to work while I dream of alpine daisies.

Roly Wettenhall
Brighton, Vic

From the prevention viewpoint, current vaccination for tetanus and hepatitis (especially hepatitis B) should be carefully considered.

On the matter of wound care, dressings like Opsite do not need to be changed two or three times a day. Changing dressings frequently interferes with the healing process and is contra-indicated.

I consider the most important item in a first aid kit is a partner. 'Solo trekking is a health hazard' should appear on all published articles that glorify the lone adventurer.

Henry Berenson
Macgregor, ACT

Not for suckers

Having just read David Clark's article in *Wild* no 68 describing the near drowning of a companion paddler, I cannot help but

want to make a comment about the article by David Clark, 'A Rapid Recovery', in *Wild* no 67. I don't wish to play the expert and offer critique or comment on the techniques used to effect the rescue because I wasn't there and also because it's easy to be wise after the event. However, I was a little disappointed that neither the author, nor the Editor, espoused the value of swift-water rescue training in such incidents.

There are many high-quality river rescue courses available in Australia either through the Australian Canoe Board or other commercial providers...

Glyn Thomas
Boonah, Qld

Cycle of death

Wild no 68 described the effects of large, devastating bushfires that affected both New South Wales and Victoria last summer.

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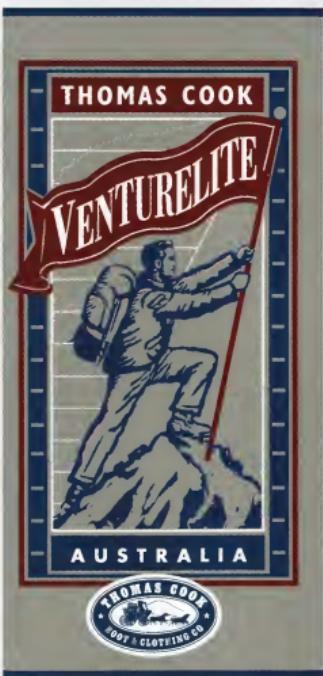
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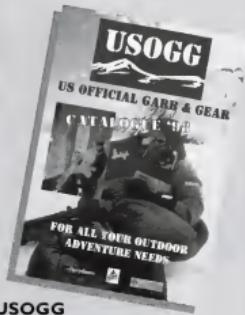


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Fires in the Blue Mountains covered a very wide area—the big one in the Wollemi burnt over 1000 square kilometres. A feature of this year's fires was that they barely touched areas burnt four years ago (in January 1994)—for example in the Grose catchment—even though they lapped around the edges of those areas. This shows that reducing fuel loads by burning is an effective means of stopping fires in the future. But once again the devastation in the bush has been enormous—with millions of insects, birds, reptiles and mammals being killed as well as fire-sensitive plants like the Blue Mountains ash.

So the cycle is again perpetuated. Large areas of bush remain unburnt for 10 or 20 years. Then the big fire comes, which devastates a large area. And the fire is made bigger and more severe by the backburns which are started by our growing army of bushfire fighters...

This is a cycle of death for the Blue Mountains environment. In the Grose catchment even now—four years after it was burnt—large areas are devoid of birds, reptiles and even insects.

Our bush needs a new management policy. Instead of long periods without fires, followed by widespread, devastating fires, we need to return to the fire cycle that was used by the Aborigines.

If hazard reduction (controlled burning) were carried out regularly throughout National Parks, it would help to reduce the effects of bad fires. The burning could be carried out in strategic areas in a patchwork pattern. Because they would be low-intensity fires lit in the cooler months, and because they would cover small areas, these areas could be rapidly re-inhabited from surrounding unburnt areas.

Controlled burning in large parks is not difficult or expensive if it is carried out using fire-bombs dropped from helicopters. A fire cycle of 12 to 15 years for a particular area would be adequate to allow regeneration of all our native plants. And air pollution would be less severe than that which we have just experienced.

Some environmentalists are critical of hazard-reduction efforts because they say that too frequent burning will change the natural diversity of plants in an area. But this concern is irrelevant if the burning period for a particular area is 12 to 15 years.

And spokespersons for the National Parks say they do not have the resources to carry out large-scale hazard reductions. During the last fire, in the Hawkesbury Council area alone there were six or more helicopters—paid for by the State Government—in use for several weeks. Hazard reduction for the whole of the Blue Mountains region could be carried out each year by a single helicopter over a few days...

Rick Jamieson
Bowen Mountain, NSW

• The Land of Ecovandalism

I suppose that the whole Wilsons Promontory thing has been done to death with the Tidal River City and the pending resort,

but having visited from the Land of Ecovandalism, I was a little worried to see such a fantastic place being misused and mismanaged...

Visiting for a week outside normal school holidays, I found that each of the 'remote' camp-sites was full to capacity and beyond on weekends...('Capacity' is around 60 people a night) This seems to be an exceptionally large number...

I discovered that many of the camp-sites and tracks were badly littered...

Saturday night at Refuge Cove was fun, though. When the afternoon shower had ended to a drizzle, I came out of the tent to discover that a large group had set up camp within a few metres of us...until 10.30 pm, they were still making drunken noise and enticing 'anyone still awake' to join the party.

One morning, I noticed an oily slick on one of the creeks, due to plates and pots being washed too close to the waterway...

The whole episode says to me that Wilsons Promontory is being sacrificed for a buck. Visitation is huge and the visitors who are coming don't seem to be practising minimum-impact techniques.

People who do not understand and practise minimum-impact camping should not be allowed to walk overnight in the park. This means that my mother would be denied access to the park. Fair enough. But if my mother were to do an overnight walk in a National Park I would like to think that, before she arrived at her camp-site, an adequate education programme would ensure that she would not litter, wash plates in rivers, toilet near rivers and campsites or make a lot of noise. More is needed than a pamphlet that relies on the visitor to read its information.

I don't believe that it is the visitors' fault. And, yes, they should have access to National Parks. But if the Victorian Government, in its wisdom, will attempt to make tourist dollars from National Parks, then it has a responsibility to put some money into protecting those parks from their actions...

Russell Withers
Yeronga, Qld

• The first time

...compliment you on the excellent standard of your magazine. This will be my first-ever subscription to a magazine and this choice was made after buying only two copies of *Wild*.

I found your articles to be interesting and informative, I thoroughly enjoyed looking over the track notes and the gear surveys were very helpful. I am very much looking forward to receiving *Wild* over the next three years. Keep up the good work and all the best for the future.

David Hegarty
North Rocks, NSW

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.



Nutrition tips for Peak Performance

with sports dietitian Liz Broad

Why do muscles feel sore after training and competition?

During intense exercise muscles keep up with the demand for energy by converting carbohydrate, in the form of glycogen, to lactic acid. The build up of lactic acid and other waste products inside your muscles is one of the causes of causing fatigue and soreness.

Endurance exercise can diminish energy stores and dehydrate your muscles leaving them feeling tired and heavy. Activities that combine strength and endurance, such as tennis and racquet sports, can be doubly taxing on muscles.

To ease muscle fatigue, it is important to "feed" muscles within 15-30 minutes of exercise. While carbohydrate is essential during this time research indicates that a combination of carbohydrate and protein can maximize restoration of muscle glycogen and enhance muscle repair.

What is the best way to ease fatigued muscles?

To combine carbohydrates and protein after exercise try cereal with milk, fruit with yoghurt, sandwiches with lean meat or low fat cheese or fruit smoothies.

If you can't face food that soon after training or are struggling for time, nutritional supplements that contain a balanced combination of these nutrients, such as Sustagen Sport*, are a convenient alternative.

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Paul Westwood looking good on intellectually Mild (28) at Princes Cave, Warronora, Sydney, Australia. Photo Michael Myers

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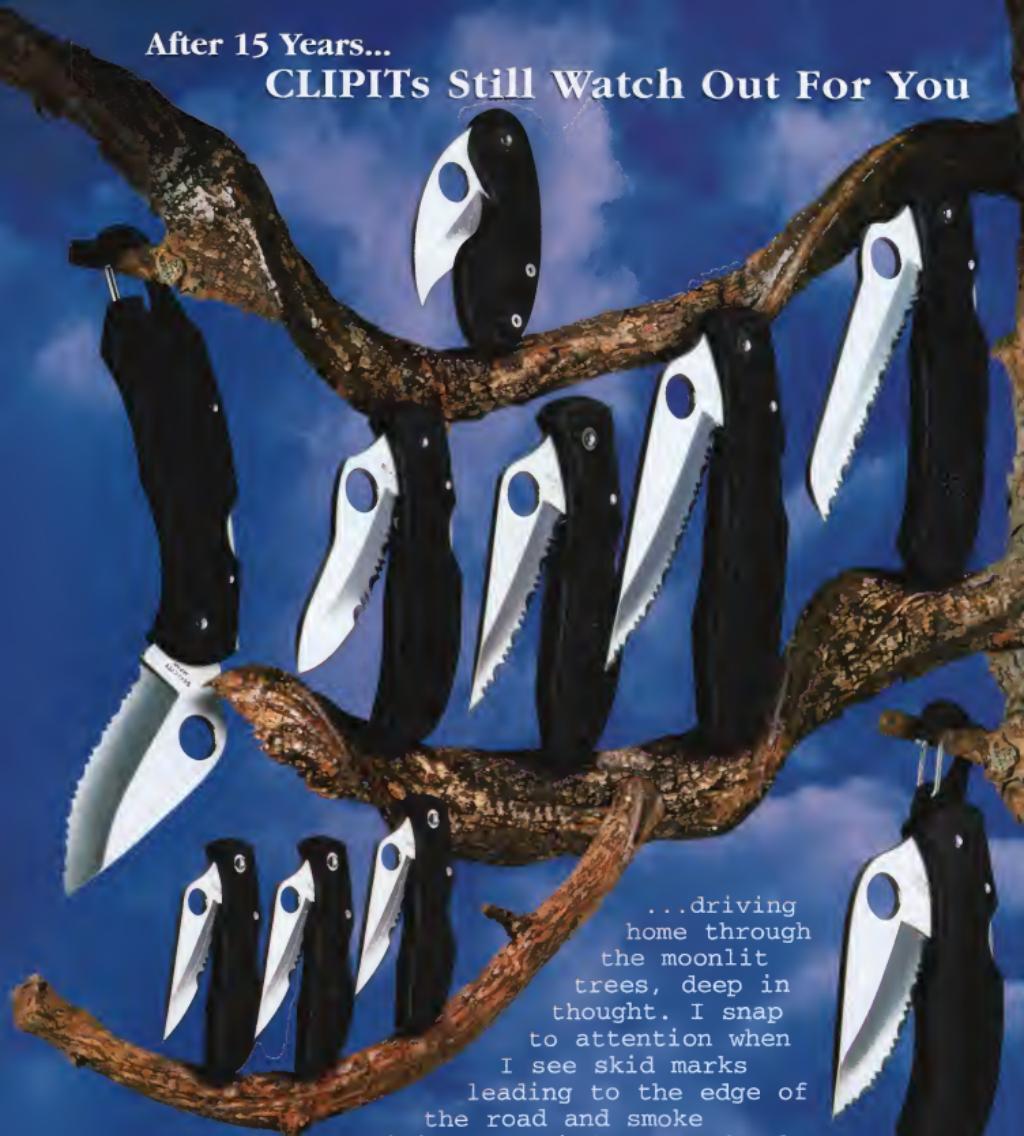


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of my body - I've got to help. I screech to a halt and stumble down the steep embankment. At the twisted wreck, the smell of petrol nearly overwhelms me. I find the driver unconscious and trapped by the seat-belt that saved him. In one reflex motion, I pull out my CLIPIT and cut the seat-belt free. Hours later, as the lights of home come into view, I realise how lucky we were to have a CLIPIT watching out for us...

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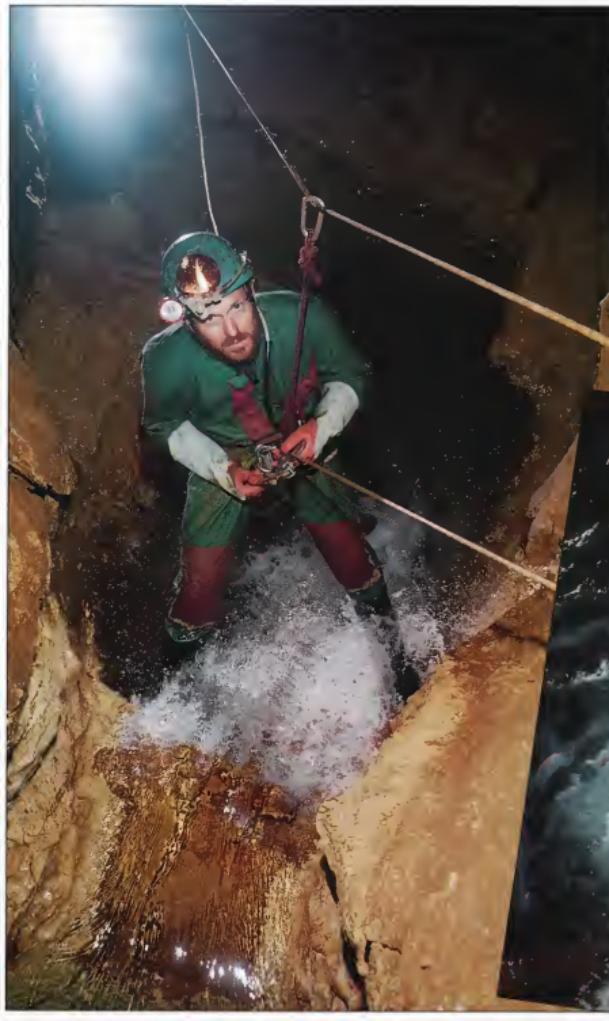
Australians in the Southern hemisphere's first kilometre deep cave

Record depth

Greg Tunnoch, Alan Ward and Mark Wilson joined a French expedition to East New Britain, Papua New Guinea, further to explore Muruk Cave, the first kilometre deep cave to be discovered in the Southern hemisphere (see *Wild Information* in *Wild* no 58). They were fortunate to be on the push trip, which linked up with a team ascending from Berenice Cave, the resurgence, and exited the cave from the lower entrance. The other party ascended the cave.

The two parties were the only cavers to complete the 1128 metre, approximately eight kilometre through trip. With clean-

Left, Greg Tunnoch in the upper section of Arcturus, Papua New Guinea. Below, Mark Wilson in nearby Muruk Cave. Alan Ward



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washed stream canyons, long swims, a sump and only a few short pitches, Warild said that it was the best trip he'd ever done.

The rest of the expedition was rather disappointing. The team spent four days cutting a track through vegetation flattened by a recent cyclone to reach Southern Cross Cave. At 200 metres higher in altitude and taking a larger inflow stream it was an exciting prospect; however, it was only extended by 300 metres.

Stephen Bunton

● Darkest depths

During February Chris Brown, Dave Doolittle, Stefan Eberhard and Tim Payne pushed the dive of the second sump in Junee Cave, Tasmania, to a depth of 60 metres using mixed gases.

In 1997 Payne, supported by Eberhard as far as Toad Hall, reached the end of the Nullarbor Plain's Cocklebiddy Cave (formerly the world's longest cave—see *Wild* nos 13 and 60) in what they described as an alpine-style push.

During 1997 in the Pearce Resurgence of New Zealand's Nettlebed Cave Australian divers recovered the body of Dave Weaver, who disappeared during a dive in 1995. During that rescue David Apperley and Richard Taylor reached a depth of 83 metres on mixed gases.

SB

● Victory for common sense

In a major decision, *Romeo v. Conservation Commission*, the High Court confirmed that

a land manager did not have to fence or signpost cliffs on the land it managed to avoid liability for an accident. The decision is very important both for land managers and for those using public land for recreational activities.

The case concerned a young woman who fell over a small Darwin cliff one night in 1987 while affected by alcohol, and became paraplegic. She had been there before and the danger was obvious. She sued the commission for negligence for failing to take precautions for her safety (fencing the cliff or signposting the danger).

The judges gave different reasons for rejecting the appeal. Justice Kirby said: 'Where a risk is obvious to a person exercising reasonable care for his or her own safety, the notion that the occupier must warn the entrant about the risk is neither reasonable nor just.'

In future, those climbers, canyoneers, cross-country skiers and others who use public land as of right for engaging in activities entailing obvious risks will rarely have an action against a land manager unless the manager increases the risks or otherwise gets involved in the activity.

Land managers have been concerned about their liability position since about 1993. This case should take much of the heat off and allow them to manage land less defensively. The High Court decision is already having an effect, with courts acting on it to dismiss speculative claims against occupiers of land.

Gordon Brysland

Wild Diary

Information about rucksack-sports events for publication in this department should be sent to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

June

20	Metrogaine R	Tas	(03) 6223 8201
20-21	Basic skills instructor assessment C	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
27-28	Introductory canoe/kayak course	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
10/30-hour Wilderness Navigation Shield R	NSW	(02) 9789 2527	

July

11-12	SA Champs 24-hour R	SA	(08) 8364 4390
25-26	Winter Classic M	Vic	(03) 9897 3536

August

1	Snowy Hydro Cabramurra Tour S	NSW	(02) 6453 8713
1-2	Introductory canoe/kayak course	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
7-9	Basic skills instructor intake C	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
8	6/12-hour R	Qld	(07) 3369 1641
8-9	NSW Champs 24-hour R	NSW	(02) 9982 4836
15	Paddy Pallin Classic S	NSW	(02) 9264 2685
	Sogaine R	Vic	(03) 9890 4352
	Mt Hotham to Dinner Plain S	Vic	(03) 9398 0316
16	River rescue course C	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
	Proficiency testing C	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
	Melbourne Nordic Ski Club Ski Chase	Vic	(03) 9898 0415

August (continued)

23	Rocky Valley Rush S	Vic	(02) 6020 8660
29	Kangaroo Hoppet, Australian Bouldering, Joey Hoppet S	Vic	(03) 5754 3103

September

5	Charles Derrick Memorial S	Vic	(02) 6251 4569
	Cygolaine R	ACT	(02) 6295 6019
	12-hour R	NSW	(02) 4975 3693
	12-hour R	SA	(08) 8364 4390

12	Brown Brothers Mt Hotham to Falls Creek S	Vic	(03) 9531 6073
12-13	Introductory canoe/kayak course	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
13	Canberra XC Ski Club Kosciuszko Tour	NSW	(02) 6266 2078

26-27	Glasshouse Trail Run M Qld	(07) 5495 4334	
4	6-hour R	Vic	(03) 9890 4352
8-10	Snow & Outdoor Trade Show (traders only)	Vic	(03) 9879 8677
9-11	Basic skills instructor intake C	Vic	(03) 9459 4277
10	12-hour R	WA	(08) 9381 8608

October

10-11	ACT Champs 24-hour R	ACT	(02) 6295 6019
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B bushwalking C canoeing M multisport R rogaining RC rockclimbing S skiing

● Names cleared

An inquiry has found that ABC Television's 'Four Corners' was inaccurate and unfair in its treatment of high-profile mountaineer Tim Macartney-Snape and a charity group he supported—the Foundation For Humanity's Adulthood. The Australian Broadcasting Authority determined that 'Four Corners'



Tim Macartney-Snape—name cleared. *Macartney-Snape collection*

wrongly portrayed the foundation as a cult in a programme screened in April 1995. It was found that 'Four Corners' had declined to present other opinions and viewpoints as a balance.

● Electronic bushwalking

Bushwalkers can visit a Web site for the longitude and latitude coordinates—used by Global Positioning System units—of popular track heads, mountains and mountain huts in the Australian Alps and the Australian Capital Territory. Visiting <http://rsc.anu.edu.au/~evans/satnav.html> may save you some of the work entailed in converting Universal Transverse Mercator grid co-ordinates—taken from survey maps—into World Geodetic System 1984 coordinates. The coordinates on the page were obtained from field fixes and therefore should be free of map errors.

Denis Evans

● Corrections and amplifications

Of the two maps Alan Daley refers to in 'High above the Howqua' on page 77, *Wild* no 67, note that the grid reference for Ritchies Hut is incorrectly marked on the *Buller South 1:25 000* Vicmap. The last phone number in Wild Diary on page 17 of *Wild* no 68 should be (02) 9789 2527. Colin (not Chris) Killick took the photo on page 31 of *Wild* no 68.

NEW SOUTH WALES

● Canyon closures

The closure of many canyons in the Wolangambe wilderness region of the Blue Mountains National Park due to the bush-

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fires last summer is likely to continue at least until August. Barriers and signs placed on the Waratah Ridge access road alerting people to the closure have been continually vandalised and there is evidence that some people have been visiting the closed canyons despite a possible heavy fine. The NPWS has been monitoring and patrolling the area.

As part of the 'Great Grose Gorse Walk', the NPWS and volunteers have recently been removing weeds from Arethusa Canyon near Katoomba. Volunteers can assist the NPWS with future activities planned to remove weeds from the Grose River catchment by phoning the Blackheath office of the NPWS on (02) 4787 8877. Recent visitors to Arethusa Canyon have reported that the water quality has markedly improved.

Last summer a member of the Watagan Wanderers Bushwalking Club slipped to his death in Kaling Falls. Other canyoneers have expressed concern at the subsequent placing of a large plaque in the canyon by members of that club. This canyon is within Kanangra-Boyd National Park.

The plethora of bolting seems to be continuing in canyons. New bolts have appeared in Tiger Snake Canyon and Wolangambe Canyon. However, bolts are not needed to negotiate these canyons. It is now standard practice for some canyoneers to take equipment to remove bolts as part of their gear.

David Noble

● Caving in the dry

El Nino has been a bonus for cavers in eastern Australia with the dry conditions allowing the exploration of numerous cave passages normally under water. Greg Ryan and Kier Vaughan-Taylor made a diving connection between McCavity and Mitchell Cave at Wellington and confirm the connection in Mitchell Cave, all within a day trip from Sydney. At Lake Burrinjuck the caves of Cave Flat have been exposed for the first time since 1983. Of these, Cave Flat Cave, surveyed in 1834, is one of Australia's first surveyed caves.

SB

● Rogaine with a difference

A mountain-bike 'rogaine' was held in the forests of the Clyde valley on the south coast on 7 and 8 March. The 1998 Active Polaris Challenge required teams of two to collect controls in seven and five hours, respectively, on the Saturday and Sunday.

Teams had to navigate their way to a camping location and thus were required to carry equipment including a tent, sleeping-bags, food, a fuel stove, a first aid kit and a bike-repair kit. Random gear checks were made and if you didn't have the required gear your team was disqualified!

VICTORIA

● Success...

About 3 pm on 15 March a seven-year-old boy became separated from his family in

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the Lilly Pilly Gully area at Wilsons Promontory. The initial searches failed and VicWalk Bushwalkers Search and Rescue members were called out the following day to assist police, National Parks and SES personnel. Many of the 58 members had also attended the 1987 search for Paddy Hildebrand, who was lost in the nearby area and never found.

After a brief search the groups headed off to line-search a nearby area but had not gone far when a radio call alerted everyone that the boy had been sighted from a media helicopter. The first group, together with police search and rescue squad members,

on ocean rocks. Two 19-year-olds from Melbourne drowned in rough seas after being swept off Cotham Rocks, near Squeaky Beach. The man and woman were exploring the rocks with friends when the woman was swept off by a wave. Her boyfriend dived in to attempt to rescue her. The friends alerted two park rangers, who ran from Tidal River. They found the man in the water holding on to rocks, and clung on to him for about ten minutes before he was swept away.

● An eight-storey Mt Everest?

Instead of going overseas to see Mt Everest, why not let Everest come to you—on the giant IMAX screen in Carlton Gardens, Melbourne. Showing from May for at least three months is *Everest*, a documentary about a group making its way to the summit. Prices are \$13.95 for adults and \$9.95 for children.

● Snow and Outdoor Trade Show

This year's Snow and Outdoor Trade Show will be held at the Melbourne Showgrounds from 8 to 10 October. (SOTA is open to traders only.) For more information, phone (03) 9879 8677.

TASMANIA



● Cradle to coast

A record field competed in the seventh Paddy Pallin Cradle to Coast endurance event from 28 February to 2 March. Competitors ran, cycled and paddled 350 kilometres from tranquil Dove Lake near Cradle Mountain to Salamanca Place on Hobart's waterfront.

Matt Dalziel (20 hours, 33 minutes) and Kris Clauson (22 hours, 45 minutes) were the first and second males, respectively, to finish. Genevieve Duncan (25 hours, 57 minutes) and Judy Clark (28 hours, 16 minutes) were the first and second females, respectively.



Above, rescuers with Johnny Gatfield, Wilsons Promontory, Victoria. Michael Giles. Right, Judy Clark, second woman home in the Paddy Pallin Cradle to Coast event, Tasmania. Matthew Newton

did not take long to find the boy in the light scrub. He was about 300 metres from the track where he'd last been seen.

At about 9.20 am VicWalk Bushwalkers Search and Rescue member David Forster carried a hungry Johnny Gatfield to a waiting ambulance—and to his mother—at the search base. After a debriefing it was back on the bus for the ride home. Thanks to all who participated. It was certainly a good result. The only sour note was to awake the next morning to the news that the Gatfields' home had been burgled.

Being a member of the search and rescue section is sometimes hard work but successful outcomes such as this one certainly make it a rewarding experience. Contact your local bushwalking club for more information about becoming involved in this demanding but satisfying work.

Monica Chapman, VicWalk Bushwalkers Search and Rescue

● ...and tragedy at the Prom

Two drownings at the Prom on 15 April highlight the dangers associated with being

The Wellington Classic was held on the same course on the final day only. Dave Green (6 hours, 57 minutes) and Tracey Wong (8 hours, 1 minute) were the male and female winners.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

● Guidance for guide?

Contributions are being sought for a bushwalking guide to the State. The guide is being compiled by John Considine and will cover all areas, with an emphasis on bushwalks of two days or more. It is expected to be published later this year. For contributor guidelines, contact John on (08) 9388 8686.

OVERSEAS

● Sumpting even deeper

During January an Anglo-French team dived the sump at 1070 metres below the lowest entrance to Gouffre Mirolda in France's Haute-Savoie. They extended it to a new depth of 1610 metres, which surpasses Gouffre Jean-Bernard (-1602 metres) as the world's deepest cave. The sump proved to be quite short and was followed by a couple of squeezes and a few short pitches to a further sump, which will provide the focus for more exploration in this cave.

The team was underground for 103 hours, exploiting a settled patch of weather. Winter trips are the norm for caving in the high Alps because run-off in the cave catchment is locked up as snow.

SB

● Cave-diver fatalities

Leading UK cave divers Rob Palmer and Rob Parker have died in separate diving accidents; Palmer in an open-water dive in the Red Sea, Parker in a cave dive in the Bahamas.

With the deaths of Sheck Exley and Ian Rolland (see Wild Information in *Wild* no 56) this means that in the last few years we have seen the deaths of four of the top English-speaking cave divers—a tragic reminder of the risks the sport entails. I had the pleasure of caving with Parker on an expedition to the Picos de Europa in Spain and am touched by the loss.

SB

● 'Coast-busters' conference

Ancient Maori methods of navigation and weather prediction were discussed at the New Zealand 'Coast-busters' Sea Kayak Symposium in March. Modern electronic helpers were talked about and a three-hour practical session on safety scenarios was conducted. Look out for next year's event. Perhaps a similar meeting should be held in Australia for this fast-growing and popular sport.

John Wilde

Readers' contributions to this department, including colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Send them to the Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

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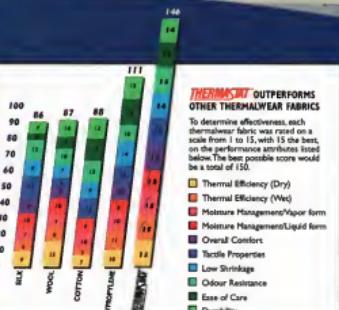
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Our vanishing natural environment

● Clearing more than trees...

A special article in the Australian Conservation Foundation's magazine reveals that land clearing is one of Australia's most significant environmental problems. 'Falling down: Land clearing in Australia' by Michael Krockenberger, published in the February issue of *Habitat*, details the effects land clearing has on biodiversity, global warming and land degradation, and the need for strong and enforceable land-clearance controls. The issues in each State are covered.

The clearing of land entails the destruction of native vegetation and habitats. It is estimated that more than five million birds are killed every year.

Land clearing on a broad scale is an enormous problem for biodiversity. However, clearing on a smaller scale can undermine sensitive, unique or fragmented ecosystems.

Hundreds of species of plants and animals are now threatened by clearing in Queensland. Most of the region in eastern and south-western Australia once covered by grassy woodlands has been cleared and the biodiversity of remaining areas is diminishing.

Land clearing contributes to the emission of greenhouse gases: in 1990 about 25 per cent of Australia's total greenhouse-gas emissions resulted from land clearing; by 1995 this had declined to 17 per cent.

Many of Australia's land degradation problems can be directly attributed to overclearing. However, despite this recognition and the ethic of Landcare clearing persists.

The Commonwealth Government has set itself the goal of revegetating 250 000 hectares annually by the year 2001. Although this will achieve a net gain in vegetation for the first time since European settlement the author argues that it will be a very difficult task. He suggests that now is the time for swift, enforceable action accompanied by incentives.

Copies of this supplement are available for \$1.50 each from the *Habitat* office at the ACF, 340 Gore St, Fitzroy, Vic 3065. See Action Box item 1.

● RFA to stand?

The legality of Regional Forest Agreements meant to settle which of Australia's trees were to be logged or reserved has been called into doubt by Sydney barrister Gary Corr. He describes Tasmania's agreement, the first statewide agreement to be signed,



It wasn't all peace, love and happiness for Tasmania's forests in March: above, an out-of-control 'controlled burn' in the Styx valley. Right, antilogging protesters near Mother Cummings Peak, Great Western Tiers. Geoff Law

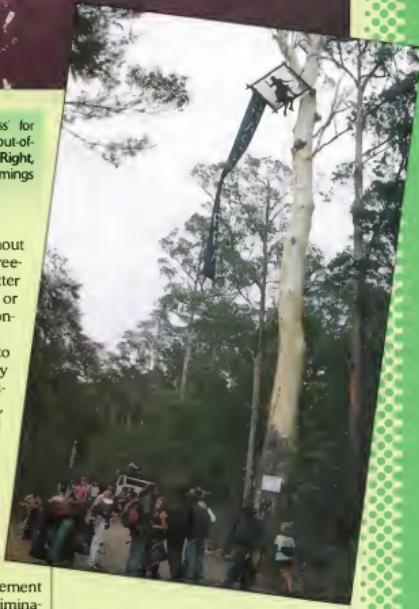
as only a statement of intent without legal effect. Corr argues that the agreement 'cannot bind Parliament or fetter the exercise of executive power', or override any statutory obligations contained in legislation.

Twelve agreements are expected to cover native forests in five States by the end of next year. When the Tasmanian one was signed in November, Prime Minister John Howard and Tasmanian Premier Tony Rundle said that the decision to make key decisions legally binding was 'an historic move'.

Corr declared regulations for wood-chip exports to be invalid. He also found that the Commonwealth decision that such exports can take place only under an agreement would result in unconstitutional discrimination between States.

● Alpine animals declining

The shallow snow cover last winter seems to be the major cause of declining numbers of animals in the Australian Alps. These include the mountain pygmy possum, the



broad-tooth rat and the alpine grasshopper. Ken Green of the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service says that 'the snow is neither as deep nor extending down the mountains as far as it used to'. He believes that numbers of animals are declining because of the lack of protective

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snow cover. Also, invading species such as swamp wallabies and lyre-birds are moving up into areas where snow has not lain in the past few years.

● Shareholders pushing for change

The Amcor Green Shareholders Group is pushing for change 'from within'. The group was formed last year to pressure Amcor to cease wood-chipping native forests and to develop a totally plantation-sourced fine copy paper made in Australia. This year members hope to have a meeting with the company's board of directors. To join the group, see Action Box item 2.

● Land-management conference

Friends of the Earth is hosting an Indigenous Rights and Sustainability conference in Melbourne from 20 to 22 November. The conference will be on Aboriginal land-management practices and how non-indigenous people can work more closely and effectively with the decision-making structures of indigenous people. Contact Anthony Amis or Cam Walker at FOE by email: foefitzroy@peg.apc.org or by phoning (03) 9419 8700.

Action Box

Readers can take action on the following matters covered in Green Pages in this issue.

1 To express concern about the lack of controls on land clearing, write to the Prime Minister, John Howard, and the federal Environment Minister, Senator Robert Hill, both c/- Parliament House, Canberra, ACT 2600.

2 If you want to join the Amcor Green Shareholders Group, contact the group c/- Environment Victoria, 19 O'Connell St, North Melbourne, Vic 3051.

3 To express support for the protection of Queensland's Port Hinchinbrook, contact Bob Mansfield, Level 3, 107 Mount St, North Sydney, NSW 2060. Phone (02) 9778 7557 or fax (02) 9778 7209.

4 To volunteer for monitoring and rehabilitation work, please phone Henrik Wahren or Warwick Papst at La Trobe University on (03) 9479 1230 or contact the Department of Natural Resources & Environment on (03) 9412 4011.

5 To oppose the excision of 285 hectares from the Alpine National Park, contact Victorian members of Parliament. Look up page 217 of the Melbourne *White Pages* L-Z for their contact details.

6 Write to the WA Premier, Richard Court, c/- Parliament House, Perth, WA 6000, to express concern about the Fitzroy River dam proposal. Ask how the environmental impacts will be assessed and for a commitment to widespread public consultation before any decisions are made. To support the ACF, phone Tim Fisher on (03) 9416 1166.

QUEENSLAND

● Mansfield to protect Hinchinbrook?

Prime Minister Howard has appointed former Optus boss Bob Mansfield—responsible for the report that largely saved the ABC—to look further at the government's approvals for Port Hinchinbrook. It is essential that he get the message that any fast tracking of the development would be unacceptable. To express your support for the protection of the area and to request a stronger imposition of environmental controls, see Action Box item 3.

Felicity Wade

NEW SOUTH WALES

● Developer must revegetate land

A developer that breached the State's planning laws was ordered to rip up the infrastructure for its residential subdivision and to revegetate the area. In *Iron Gates Pty Ltd v. Oshlack* the developer of the Iron Gates site at Evans Head on the north coast of NSW was found to have breached the State's planning laws by developing in breach of its planning consent. It was ordered to rip up the infrastructure for its 100-lot residential subdivision and to replant 40 hectares of native vegetation. The developer appealed the decision but the Court of Appeal confirmed that the developer must not only comply with the demolition order but also revegetate the entire site.

Chief Justice Murray Gleeson said in his judgment: 'Contrary to what was proposed, there was extensive clearing of the land. Indeed, the timber on substantial portions of it was clear-felled. The proposed wildlife corridor was obliterated. Far from retaining all of the native vegetation except to the extent to which its destruction was necessary, the developer, in substantial areas of the land, totally destroyed all vegetation.'

● Ban on helicopters overturned

A commercial helicopter operation has been approved to operate over the Blue Mountains National Park. Heli scenic was approved by the Oberon Council in February and will start with 1500 helicopter flights a year over the National Park to a property in the Megalong valley. The council reversed its previous decision to ban the proposal despite concerns about disturbance of the peace and to threatened species.

The company will offer 'eco tours' which will comprise a one-way helicopter flight, a 4WD tour through the National Park and lunch at a 'restaurant' by Coxs River. However, the Environment Protection Authority is yet to approve the landing site. One helicopter company already operates over the park.

VICTORIA

● Goolengook logging illegal?

A magistrate has stated that the prosecution could not show that the logging of Goolengook was legal—when he found Senator Bob Brown not guilty of 'obstructing a lawful logging operation' in the Moe Magis-

trate's Court in February. Magistrate Dugdale stated that there was no case to answer for Senator Brown, who was arrested last year in the Goolengook forest in East Gippsland.

Senator Brown's barrister Brian Walters, a founding director of Wild Publications, claimed that the Department of Natural Resources & Environment breached the *Heritage Rivers Act* by logging the river's protected corridor. It was argued that the coupe plans for that area, drawn up using the East Gippsland Forest Management



Wild Publications director and barrister Brian Walters successfully defended Bob Brown in a landmark court case following his arrest at an anti-logging demonstration in East Gippsland. *Walters collection*

Plan, contradicted the requirements of the Act. Where an instrument contravenes the Act, it is deemed 'void'.

There has been a strong call for all logging operations in East Gippsland to cease until a valid management plan is implemented.

Since then, legislation has been introduced into the Victorian Parliament which retrospectively removes 800 hectares of forest from the Goolengook Heritage River Area and so authorises the logging which was not lawful at the time it was carried out.

● Aftermath of National Park fire

In early January the 'Caledonia fire' burnt extensive tracts of subalpine vegetation on the Howitt Plains in the Alpine National Park (see Wild Information in *Wild* no 68). Most of the Holmes and Bennison Plains were burnt to some degree, and all major plant communities were affected—grasslands, heath lands and moss beds. Wellington Plain was particularly badly burnt; in some places only bare ground, charred stumps and denuded rocks remain.

Unlike in most other places in Australia, fires are relatively uncommon on alpine and subalpine plains, but they do occur and are likely to occur in the future. Although above-ground parts of plants may be destroyed most plants in these areas can grow back from underground

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parts that will often survive a fire (such as the lignotubers of snow gums).

Of particular concern are the effects on wetlands—the water storage and 'filtering' system of the Australian Alps—and the added impact of continued grazing by free-ranging domestic cattle on an already damaged landscape. Monitoring and research have begun in some of the affected areas to answer questions such as: How will the vegetation respond over time? Do any sites require active rehabilitation or special protection? And, perhaps more importantly, how should we best manage high plains vegetation? See Action Box item 4.

Henrik Wahren

● Mt McKay 'excised' earlier?

A reader who was recently at Mt Hotham picked up a July 1997 issue of *High Country Sports* and spotted a reference to Mt McKay being 'already within the resort boundary'! In reality, Mt McKay was excised from the Alpine National Park by the Victorian Government in November (refer to *Green Pages* in *Wild* no 68). See Action Box item 5.



A section of the 23 kilometre fire break bulldozed near Lake Tali Karm, Victoria, during the January bushfires but not needed as the fire didn't come near it. Above right, part of Wellington Plain after the fires. The tracks have been caused by decades of cattle grazing. Henrik Wahren. Far right, VNPA founder Ros Garnet. Geoff Durham

● The 'Great' Prom Walk?

The VNPA opposes the creation of the southern section of the Great Prom Walk, one of the projects at Wilsons Promontory to be funded over the next year. The association states that there are environmental and safety issues. The motive for the track is thought to be the facilitation of a commercial walking operation. The VNPA says that the south end of the Prom should be kept in its pristine state without a new track, without huts and without opening the way for incremental development. (See *Wildfire* on page 9.)

● Rare wetland threatened

A rare alpine wetland in East Gippsland would be threatened if a proposed plantation of the Australian Alps—and the added impact of continued grazing by free-ranging domestic cattle on an already damaged landscape. Monitoring and research have begun in some of the affected areas to answer questions such as: How will the vegetation respond over time? Do any sites require active rehabilitation or special protection? And, perhaps more importantly, how should we best manage high plains vegetation? See Action Box item 4.

Studies have shown that the continued clearing and subsequent regrowth of the catchment area would dry out and destroy the wetland, which supports many rare and threatened species. Such land management would be in conflict with the precautionary principle on which Victoria's *Flora and*



Fauna Guarantee Act is based. The wetlands policy of the Commonwealth Government requires all levels of government to use the cautious approach, especially when the effects are unknown.

● Co-founder of VNPA dies

Ros Garnet, the co-founder of the Victorian National Parks Association in 1952, died on 7 February aged ninety-one. He had been honorary secretary of the association for two decades. He was also a field naturalist, a botanist, the author of several books and was active in many conservation groups.

● Writers on the nature trail

Write 1500 words of poetry or prose on the subject of nature and enter the nature-writing competition being held by The Friends of Mallacoota. For an entry form, send a SSAE to June Drake, Nature Writing Comp, c/- Post Office, Mallacoota, Vic 3892. Entries close on 31 July.

TASMANIA

● Protests hot up in forests

In March there was an escalation of both logging and protests in Tasmania's wild forests. In response to moves to log a 60 hectare 'coupe' on the slopes of Mother Cummings Peak in the Great Western Tiers,

local people established a blockade that significantly delayed tree-felling operations.

A focal point of the protest was the effort of 'Hector the Protector' (Neil Smith), ensconced 25 metres up one of the threatened gum-topped stringybarks. Linked to the rest of the world by email, and with a computer powered by the sun and a bicycle generator, his tree-top protest lasted two weeks. Eventually he was arrested and charged with numerous offences.

On the ground other conservationists chained themselves to equipment and to the road. A group of 25 women was arrested while 'picnicking' in the threatened forest. On 22 March over 1000 conservationists held a peaceful picnic in the disputed area and then marched up the road to the coupe. More than 60 were arrested at a police roadblock. This action brought the number of arrests to over 100, making it Tasmania's biggest protest action since the Franklin Blockade of 1982-83.

More protests are expected when logging starts in the forests adjacent to the historical walking track to Blakes Opening in South-west Tasmania.

Geoff Law

● A bad case of burn-out

Forestry Tasmania's contentious practice of regeneration burning also came under the spotlight in March when several of its 'controlled burns' escaped.

The practice entails setting alight a logged area covering up to 120 hectares. The burns are usually carried out in March as this is when Forestry Tasmania believes the optimum conditions of dry fuel surrounded by more moist forest in cool conditions prevail.



However, several burns went ahead in March despite forecasts of hot, windy weather. On 12 March, the hottest March day in Tasmania since 1940, some of these burns escaped and incinerated more than 1500 hectares of neighbouring bush and plantations.

The worst fire was in the Styx valley, not far from Tasmania's World Heritage Area. It took forestry and company officers more than three days to subdue this fire. Only ten days later another 'controlled burn', this time in the State's north-east, escaped its boundaries and gutted

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over 4500 hectares of old-growth forest
and regrowth near Mt Saddleback.

No government action was taken against
Forestry Tasmania.

Meanwhile, a spate of fires lit by un-
known arsonists burnt more than 10 000
hectares at a number of locations around
the State including the Rocky Cape Na-
tional Park, Mt Roland and Bruny Island.

GL

• Mt McCall Track action withdrawn

World Expeditions has withdrawn its legal
action against Minister for Environment
Senator Robert Hill in regard to the
decision made to leave the Mt McCall
Track in South-west Tasmania open.

It was originally planned that the 4WD
track to the Franklin River would be closed
and rehabilitated on the basis of the damage
it caused to the World Heritage Area (see
Editorial in *Wild* no 60). However, an
amendment to the World Heritage Manage-
ment Plan ensured that it would remain
open and that a quarry could be built
alongside it.

The adventure-tour operator withdrew its
Federal Court legal action due to the re-
quirement that Tasmanian Environment
Minister Peter Hodgman join the legal
action and because of the high costs it
would incur if it lost the case.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA
• Fitzroy River threatened

The Fitzroy River—the largest in the
Kimberley region—faces enormous environmental
impacts in light of a major dam and
irrigation proposal. The feasibility study for
the proposal was approved by the State
Cabinet in August 1997.

Western Agricultural Industries, a WA
company, proposes to construct between
one and three major dams in the upper
Fitzroy River and Margaret River catchments,
an earthen canal of up to 500 kilometres
and a weir at Fitzroy Crossing. It also
proposes to develop the limited ground-
water resources, to clear large areas of
pastoral lease and vacant Crown land and
to allocate free water entitlements to the
company for resale to irrigators. Transfer of
ownership/leaseholdings of land and water
to WAI is critical to the viability of this
proposal. Effective extinguishment of native
title would be required.

A Memorandum of Understanding has
been signed by WAI and the Western
Australian Government. Groundwater de-
velopments are to proceed first, pending
the feasibility assessment.

Environmental impacts are expected in:
water extraction; flooding; increased dry-
weather (unseasonal) flows; dam filling
time; flora and fauna and related issues;
gorge habitats; estuarine ecology; pesticides
and herbicides; soil degradation; and aquifer
depletion.

The Fitzroy valley in general and Dimond
Gorge in particular are areas of extra-
ordinary scenic beauty which support a
wealth of natural and Aboriginal cultural
values. The damming of the gorge and the

profound changes to the Fitzroy River
which would result would be a tragedy
of immense proportions. See Action Box
item 6.

Tim Fisher

OVERSEAS
• Logging, mining impacts

Community Aid Abroad is conducting a
campaign to raise awareness of the negative
impacts mining has on communities, using
Australian mines in Indonesia as an
example. The Indonesia Mining Campaign
seeks to assist those who are faced with the
loss of land and livelihood because of an
Australian-run mine, and to pressure
Australian mining companies into improv-
ing their performance particularly in mat-
ters concerning indigenous people.



Aboriginal art in Sir John Gorge, Fitzroy River, Kimberley area, Western Australia. Bob Brown

The organisation's magazine *Horizons*
reports that a marked improvement is
needed in the way these companies relate
to local communities so that land rights
are respected, proper compensation is
paid, human-rights abuses are avoided
and environmental impact is minimised.

In East New Britain, Papua New Guinea,
a social action group has formed in
response to an escalation of logging; the
pollution and erosion caused by illegal
logging practices; and the increasing abuse
of landowners' rights. The East New
Britain Social Action Committee, a project
partner of Community Aid Abroad, uses
action, education and information to give
traditional landowners some choice and
control over their land and valuable
resources.

Horizons reports that in the past
landowners were often unaware of the
true value of their trees and of the
possible alternative uses of their land. An
environment and awareness programme
is helping to inform communities of their
legal rights as landowners and of the
environmental and social implications of
uncontrolled and illegal logging opera-
tions. ☐

Readers' contributions to this department, including
colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than
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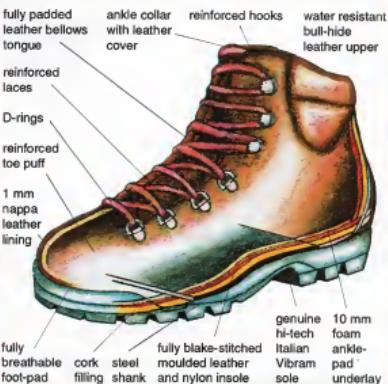
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Movable feasts

Soldiers are not the only ones who 'walk on their stomachs', by Quentin Chester

I have begun to notice that with each bushwalk my load gets heavier. This is despite extensive experience in packing rucksacks and several decades of outstanding technological advances in lightweight outdoor equipment.

Another fact to come to my attention is that significantly more of my rucksack's waist-belt webbing is now required to encircle my circumference. And lately my boots are only visible to me when I'm reclining in a horizontal fashion.

It may also be appropriate at this juncture to note that certain uncouth elements within the bushwalking fraternity have seem fit to point and snigger with childish mirth as they look upon my modest, alfresco luncheons of continental cold meats, soft and hard cheeses, sourdough loaves, marinated fruits de mer, garden-fresh salad vegetables, selected condiments and tangy, oriental sauces.

Were it not for the onset of my postprandial torpor and the unnecessarily brisk pace at which these muscle-bound oafs see fit to resume their perambulations I might be of a mind to take them to task for their vulgar habits. If only the track were wide enough to accommodate my sturdy frame I would endeavour to walk alongside and hector them for their miserly portions, inedible fruit 'leathers' and insipid crispbreads smeared with odious yeast extracts. And had I not been so eager to linger over my third insouciant mugful of chemin blanc I would describe to them the food chains that bind me. I would show them my bulging mussels, litho chillies and lean rasher. I would explain to them that the outdoors world is my smoked oyster.

Of course it was not always so. When I began my expeditions to this continent's savage and far-flung quarters the notion of bushwalking cuisine was at best oxymoronic. In that darker age the most popular lightweight meals were dehydrated dinners



In the bush we're all suckers for a good feed.
Lucas Trfrey

fancifully described as Farmhouse Stew and Chicken Supreme. When rehydrated these powdery concoctions formed singularly unpalatable gruels with the texture, smell and lumpy appearance of a partially digested meal, right down to the tiny cubes of diced carrot. It is little wonder that they were more commonly known as Farmyard Spew and Chucken Spewpreme.

The main alternatives to these abominations were assorted tinned foods. As well as the ubiquitous tins of baked beans and spaghetti there was camp pie—a mysterious, pink brick of congealed fat,

sawdust and abattoir sweepings. Tins of braised steak and onions also enjoyed a certain vogue for a time though this product has since been relabelled so that top breeders can recommend it.

The most palatable of the tinned foods are undoubtedly things like herrings, kippers and salmon. To me, however, the smell of tinned fish is a pungent reminder of my grade-seven teacher, who had a body odour that could have been bottled as camel repellent, and whose daily lunch was a black-spotted banana and a soggy, white-bread, sardine sandwich loosely wrapped in none-too-greaseproof paper.

Apart from dubious contents, the main drawback of tinned food is weight. The occasional tin may be tolerable for an overnight camp-out but tinned provisions are hardly practical for a week of hard bushwalking unless Dean Lurkin comes out of retirement to lug your pack. In the end we made do with the least offensive of the packet meals—things such as macaroni cheese, Rice-A-Riso and Vesta dinners. These were mainly

starch with some salt and chemical flavourings added but at least they satisfied our pubescent longings for instant fuel.

By the late 1970s the outdoors emporia were beginning to stock assorted freeze-dried meals. This process purportedly preserves slightly more of the food's original flavour and texture. Unfortunately, as most of the early products came from the USA this meant that even the savoury dishes had a sickly sweet taste. Not only that; our sheltered upbringings meant that we were unsure what to do with packets labelled Turkey Tetrazzini and Crunchy Granola. To us they sounded more like medical conditions than meals.

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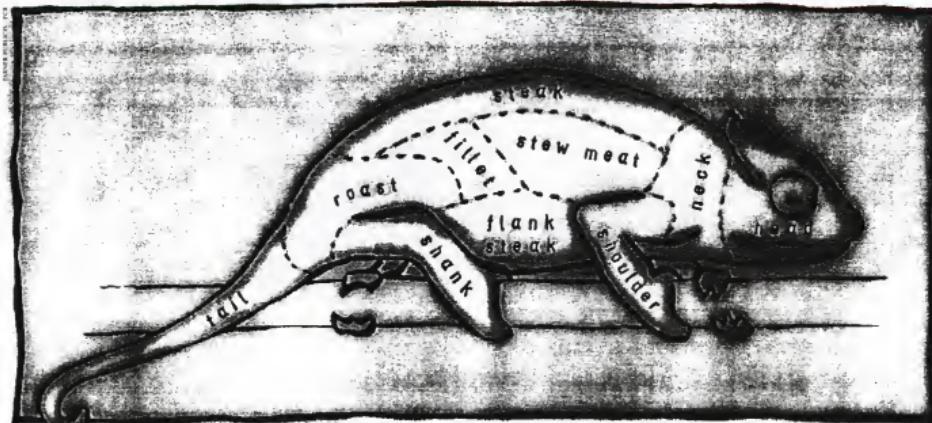


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Fortunately, help was on its way from across the Tasman. An enterprising freeze-dried manufacturer found a way to offload meat products, presumably unfit for export by the normal means, from the land of the long, white cloud. Dishes included chilli con carne (or carnage as we came to call it) and sliced lamb and peas (which, out of deference to the New Zealand accent, became sliced lumps and piss). For once the contents of the packets bore a reasonable resemblance to something edible. There was, however, a downside. A packet of carnage usually yielded violent, antisocial by-products. It's no wonder the Kiwis make such a fuss over testing their tents in wind tunnels.

While the sliced lamb and peas was not as volatile as carnage, something about its aroma troubled me. It was on a ski trip that I finally solved the mystery. Alpine air always sharpens your sense of smell and we were in a snow-cave on the Bogong High Plains with a billy of SL&P bubbling on the stove. When the cave filled with a fog of lamb fragrance I turned to our leader, a man with a delicate constitution. 'Rusty!' I cried. 'That's what it smells like. Good old Rusty!' He looked at me. 'You don't mean', he said, his cheeks beginning to bulge with what I hoped was only air, 'your fat, slobbering beagle?' I can't imagine why but there wasn't a queue for seconds.

I am always amazed at the capacity of smells to trigger powerful and not always positive associations. Around the same time freeze-drieds appeared on the scene muesli became the fashionable bush breakfast. My health-conscious friends religiously started each day with a heaped bowl of this stuff, dusted with powdered milk and doused with water. Many of the mixtures looked to me like chaff and birdseed but the real source of my aversion is the memory of another ski trip when a friend—who had a savage head cold and couldn't smell a thing—emptied half the contents of a Sigg bottle on to her bowl of muesli and milk. Luckily, bystanders warned her that the bottle in question did not contain water but the stove fuel Shellite.

At some point in the early 1980s I began to think that there must be more to wild dining than chicken noodle soup and glutinous macaroni. Around this time I must have developed a taste for stronger flavours because goodies like kalamata olives, pepperoni and dill pickles gradually found their way into my food bag. There was also a realisation that it was possible to carry some fresh food—things such as onions, bacon, smoked (not tinned) fish and the odd, crunchy vegetable—to add a dash of authenticity to recipes otherwise heavily reliant on dried fare. Above all I came to appreciate that all you had to do to turn an ordinary feed into a culinary triumph (by bush standards) was to throw in a bit of fresh garlic, some chopped ginger or a dash of tabasco.

In a way it's humiliating to look back and realise how long my peers and I persevered with instant meals. Perhaps we were simply

too distracted to bother with epicurean niceties. With our clumsy self-education in life, love and adventure we were slowly learning, as with our foil-packed dinners, that the reality rarely matched the serving suggestions. When it finally became clear that we weren't destined to climb Mt Everest our trips away became decidedly more convivial and flavoursome.

I still read Chris Bonington's mountaineering epics. However, my principal interest is not the plucky pair of lead climbers pushing to the summit but the catering arrangements as described by Mike Thompson. In *Annapurna South Face* he noted: 'Food was the consuming passion of the expedition, and if the members were not actually engaged in eating it or getting rid of it, from one end or the other, they would be talking of it or dreaming of it.'

This pretty much sums up the attitude that now prevails in my small circle of amply proportioned walking partners. As one recently said: 'You know it's serious when you're still gobbling one meal land! you're already planning the next.'

The old truism 'food tastes better in the wild' still holds: it has something to do with the quality of the air and the effect exertion has on appetite and taste buds. It's also true that good food tastes even better, and it is a high priority with any of our jaunts to get as close as possible to the kind of nosh we enjoy at home.

However, there is some method behind this gustatory obsession, this confusion of means and ends, these menus and itineraries. Food is a powerful lure and a motivating force when the spirit is willing but the flesh is flagging (vice versa). Where once youthful exuberance or competitive drive may have been enough to propel you the last three kilometres along a ridge, the mouth-watering prospect of tucking into a spicy paella or some other equally sumptuous repast when you get to camp can be an effective substitute.

This strategy wears thin towards the end of the trip when the only things left in the food bags are a couple of packets of soup and some crushed Ryvitas. My associates and I get around this by preplanning a homecoming feast. This usually features items not normally feasible on a long walk—things such as crusty breads, seafood and exotic salads. We have even been known to coordinate the express delivery of several dozen fresh oysters with our projected return time. Such enticements can usually be relied upon to get us through the last tortuous day or two.

While the rapturous contemplation of food can also serve as a useful distraction when tent-bound in a storm or if the campfire conversation turns to tax reform, caution is advisable. There is a danger that group members with over-stimulated appetites may turn feral and devour dwindling supplies including the precious few remaining squares of fruit and nut. Even worse is the risk of encouraging a tiresome kind of food snobbery where

budding gourmands boast about their warm spatchcock salads and lobster ravioli in tamarind coulis.

The point about outdoors eating is not the exquisite virginity of your olive oil but the simple fact that there is time to give food its due. A meal at home can be just another instant gratification in a hurried schedule. By contrast, when you're in the back of beyond the anticipation, preparation and consumption of a basic rice dish is a major event. Thus cooking on a small fire or a lightweight stove can be an act of skill and grace that occupies the entire evening. Watching some bush cooks deftly orchestrate ingredients and manoeuvre billies and frying-pans over glowing coals is like being part of a Japanese tea ceremony.

Admittedly, my style is somewhat more robust but I have learned the value of working to a rough plan and carrying a few, useful weapons. After years of almost impaling myself as I tried to chop vegetables on a slippery, plastic plate with a tiny Swiss Army knife, I now tote a large, sharp folding knife and a small cutting board. Another handy utensil is a broad, wooden spatula which is good for soups, stir-fries and scraping pots. By far the most important apparatus for the bush cook, however, is the humble headtorch so that you can peer lovingly into your sauces and stews.

It seems highly unlikely that the kind of dinners I knock up when camping are going to win international acclaim. Then again, I've always been a bit of a do-it-yourself, meat-and-potatoes character. In truth, the finest dining of my life has been nowhere near a restaurant. And some of the best things I've tasted in recent years have come off a campfire under a big night sky at the close of a day out with friends. Things like legs of lamb cooked with rosemary, mustard and red wine in a camp oven. Or chicken curries with basmati rice, hot chutneys and naan bread seared on the coals.

For all this, I confess that my favourite bush repast has become the extended lunch. My pack might be heavier, my waistline may be widening and gauche passers-by might laugh but is there anything grander than easing back in the shade with a view of far-away peaks and savouring a wedge or two of sharp Cheddar, some diced cucumber, a handful of cherry tomatoes, the odd black olive, a few discs of garlic mewurst, slices of rye bread coated with hummus, a couple of dolmades and just one, two or more smoked oysters? ☺

Quentin Chester

Quentin Chester (see Contributors in *Wild* no 3) writes regularly about going bush. He is the co-author of *The Outdoor Companion*, *The Kimberley—Horizons of Stone and Australia's Wild Islands*. His next book, *The Wild Calling*, which includes several stories that first appeared in this column, will be published in July.

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Out for the long haul

Remote-area preparedness, by Rob Blakers



long, remote-area trips. The opportunity to do them comes all too infrequently. Incredibly worthwhile, they can be among the landmarks of one's life.

By and large, the long trip into the wilderness differs only slightly from the more modest long weekend- or short-week outing. More rigorous planning is required but similar principles of prudent adventure apply on the way. The main differences will be in the weight of your pack before the walk and the degree of your contentment afterwards.

The key to any remote-area trip of a week or more is preplanning. You need a

well-prepared mind and the necessary gear and materials. It is best to plan well ahead but not to the extent that you lose the spontaneity which is part of a trip to unknown wilds. If your passion is photography, for instance, have a look at existing pictures of the area in books, on cards and posters, but resist the temptation to study them all so closely that you set off intending to find and replicate someone else's pictures! What you discover yourself will always be far more rewarding and exciting. You should know the main characteristics of your trip and have a clear understanding of what you might encounter along the way.

PREPLANNING AND PREPARATION

So, when should you go? And where to? Generally, you'd avoid the Kimberley or Cape York at the height of the dry and wet seasons, and Southwest Tasmania in the midst of a blizzard-filled winter. (This does not mean that these places shouldn't be visited at those times—they may well be most dramatic and beautiful then. But they are not ideal as a destination for your first, long trip.)

When are your holidays? If you want mild weather conditions, head north or downhill during the cooler months. The arid, inland region of Australia is vast and diverse with countless opportunities to find solitude and long tracks; Australia's coastline and lower ranges are often deserted and delightful.

Conversely, seek the elusive, sparkling days of firm snow for that long ski-trip from Mt Jagungal in the Snowy Mountains. In the summer explore the mountains and the wild south, with wild flowers, high peaks, and rivers to float. Southwest Tasmania beckons! However, always check for local climate variations in the seasons. In (South-west) Tasmania, for instance, January is notoriously prone to wet and wild westerlies; the calmer and drier weather comes in February and March.

Nor the way to go. All photos Rob Blakers

Now think about the trip. Consider your route and destinations. Allow yourself flexible options. Instead of a straight 'point A to point B' trip, you may prefer to plan for a series of base camps, each of two or three days' duration. Travel off the beaten path. Go exploring. Plan lots of side-trips.

The best way to get to know an area is to be active there. Follow your interests seriously. Take your botany book, camera, binoculars, musical instrument, water-colours, crayons, pens, meditation blanket. These are all fine tools for communing with landscape and nature.

Prepare yourself mentally. Research the region you plan to visit. Study maps, texts, guidebooks and botanical/geographical literature. Think through the different stages of the trip.

Cutting down on weight

- Carry a pack towel rather than a large, standard towel. Better still take a Chux cloth, which does a very good job.
- Store the right amount of toothpaste or sun-cream in tiny, plastic jars such as film containers and leave those great, heavy tubes behind. (Label each jar clearly!)
- Use a sturdy tent-peg as a toilet trowel.
- To lighten the load eliminate all water from your packed food items (with the exception of carefully selected and rationed luxuries such as a daily apple). That is, carry only foods that can be rehydrated. A small amount of these goes a long way.
- Inner layers of clothing give a better 'warmth-for-weight' ratio than bulky, outer layers. Consider carrying two or three inner thermal layers and just a single pile jacket rather than two jackets. (That's for a really cold trip.) Or just omit the pile jacket and take the thermals for a not-so-freezing trip.
- Make sure that all the containers carrying your goodies (jams, tahini, yeast flakes) are ultralight-weight. Never carry glass jars or bottles.
- A silk inner sheet for the inside of your sleeping-bag is cosy and much lighter than a cotton one.
- Choose comfortable walking shoes of the lightest weight that will withstand the rigours of the trip.
- Share tent space and fuel stoves among your group.
- Leave your fork behind; it's not essential.
- Think lightweight: if in doubt, leave it out!



Above, a reassuring sight. Main photo, making the most of what's available. (Pindars Peak, South-west Tasmania.)

Consider potential obstacles and how you might deal with them. Contemplate possible camp-sites and check the availability of drinking water. Wilderness travel is never easy and an extended, remote-area trip requires a high degree of self-reliance.

Be attentive to your thoughts and feelings before—and during—the trip. Consider the needs, circumstances and capabilities of your companions in relation to your own. If you haven't all walked together before you might like to

go on a shorter, 'practice' walk before the big trip. Discuss your expectations.

Make sure that you plan your time away carefully; that responsibilities, and those which may arise, are dealt with or delegated so that you can be easy in your mind.

Check your plans meticulously. Have a check-list (see box below) and use this for every trip. In addition to this basic check-list consider the following points, which are especially pertinent to a long trip.

- Take the right amount of food. Work out daily allowances on the basis of your experience on shorter trips. It's not worth risking hunger or carrying loads of excess supplies. Include as many diverse types of food as you can reasonably carry. Include large amounts of your favourite, lightweight goodies. Make your meals balanced, and substantial. A huge range of tasty and nutritious dried foods is now available (try your local health-food shop) or dehydrate your own delicious concoctions in one of those new-fangled but dreadfully efficient dehydrators. If in doubt, you might like to take a vitamin supplement on a longer trip.
- In some places it may be possible to organise a food drop from a plane or from the nearest road. Either way, pack that extra supply well so that it will be safe.
- Take the right amount of film/water-colour paints/paper. Imagine the fantastic sunrises, dramatic landscapes and rare animals which you'll doubtless see along the way.
- Carry a well-stocked first aid kit. Be prepared for multiple use of bandages, plaster, antiseptic. Take sufficient lip salve, sun-cream, toothpaste and toiletries.
- If you're travelling with 'technological assistance' (raft, kayak, skis) take a well-stocked repair kit. Again, be prepared for a string of emergencies. For various minor mishaps a length of lightweight cord is often useful (as a spare shoelace, a clothes-line, to tie down the tent, to pack-haul on a steep section of the route, as a pair of suspenders) and so is a small roll of gaffer tape and a small sewing kit with a strong needle. Always carry a spare set of batteries for your camera.
- Examine the condition of your gear before you go: rucksack (straps and buckles okay?) tent (poles okay?) Does the floor need patching? shoes (are they well worn in, and will they hold together for the duration of the trip—especially if it gets wet or rough?) skis (are those bindings still okay?)
- Consider laminating your maps or reinforcing them with clear sticky tape along the folds.

A basic check-list of clothes and gear

Clothes

- walking shoes/boots
- lightweight footwear for camp/hut/tent (optional)
- socks
- underwear
- thermal pants
- short trousers
- long trousers
- overpants
- gaiters
- thermal tops
- long-sleeved lightweight shirt for warm weather
- thermal jackets/shirts
- waterproof jacket
- sun-hat
- gloves (waterproof/finger/mitts)
- Balacava
- handkerchief

Gear

- rucksack
- tent/fly/poles/pegs/snow-pegs/groundsheet
- sleeping-bag and inner sheet
- sleeping-mat
- map and compass
- first aid kit
- repair kit
- sun-cream and lip salve
- small torch (with good batteries)
- water-bottle or water-bag
- matches and candle
- watch
- whistle
- day pack
- cup and plate
- knife and spoon
- fuel stove and billy, fuel and dish scourer
- money
- scarf/pack towel/Chux cloth
- pen and paper
- camera/tripod/binoculars
- toothbrush, toothpaste and personal toiletries
- toilet paper
- plastic bags and elastic bands
- books

● If you're going to be near water, or rain—or Tasmania—bring extra plastic bags to keep your gear dry.

● Obtain a weather forecast for the first few days of the trip.

● Leave accurate details of your route with someone reliable. Allow for your deviations and uncertainties of timing but have a clear deadline.

● Make sure that your car, or other transport, is sound, and that planned access roads are traversable.

● Bring writing-paper and pens. Plan letters to friends; a journal; articles; a novel! Writing is an enjoyable and productive way to sit out a blizzard.

● Bring enough good books, and candles. Consider taking reading matter which is heavy in content but light within the pack; books that will invite you to ponder and reflect. Encourage your travel companions to bring books to your taste so that you can share them.

● Choose friendly, reliable companions. A 'mix' of people can be good; their diverse skills will complement your own.

● Be ruthless and leave out unnecessary and/or heavy items. Think minimum! Simplify!

● Now, check that your rucksack is large enough to carry everything, and that your muscles and enthusiasm are large enough to carry your rucksack.

● Be prepared for a 'monster' pack but remember that it will become lighter as you progress.

● Finally, before you go, have a feast of your favourite, heavyweight goodies (although not any weed species with spreadable seeds).

ALONG THE WAY

Take your time. Find a routine which suits your interests and schedule. Rise early; mornings are especially fine times for wandering, photography, meditation and a sumptuous, gastronomic repast to sustain you for the day ahead. Explore. Be spontaneous. Make extended side-trips. Linger.

AT THE END OF THE TRIP

Savour the experience. You will find that the qualities of bush and mountain are subtly absorbed. Active, receptive time in the wilderness brings serenity and invigoration to the mind and spirit.

Rob Blokes has walked and photographed around Tasmania since arriving for a three-week skiing holiday 17 years ago. His most memorable long trip was a 14-day rafting excursion in South-west Tasmania. His pack for the two-day walk to the headwaters of the river and the portages thereafter was almost as tall as he and too heavy to lift off the ground unaided.

Feathertop and Beyond

Glenn van der Knijff recalls the experiences of two near-novices on one of Victoria's finest alpine walks





With despair we stared into the ravine-like creek crossing on Snowy Creek, realising immediately that dad's Renault would not get any further. A glance at the map told us that we were about eight kilometres short of where we had intended to start walking, and we were now in for a long day's walk to Mt Feathertop and Federation Hut. From the hut, our plan was to descend Diamantina Spur to the West Kiewa River, follow the river upstream a little and climb Lake Spur to the Bogong High Plains. Our route would then take us over the Fainters and eventually, if all went according to plan, we would finish at Bogong village.

We shouldered our rucksacks and walked along Dungey Track. The Snowy Creek valley was mystical in the soft, early morning light. The sun reflected off the dew like thousands of fairy lights, and a fog hung over the valley floor.

Craig Prince, my companion for this trip, had not done much walking before. I had only limited experience, too—although I did have a new rucksack! We were both in our final year of university and still relative greenhorns, and all too soon our aching backs indicated that our inexperience in bushwalking also meant that we had brought the wrong sort of food to carry. The heavy tins of Spam (yuk!) and

both surprising and saddening to see that these weeds had completely taken over the ground cover beneath what under normal circumstances would be a prime example of Australian subalpine forest.

We had already covered about 15 kilometres but Mt Feathertop, visible sporadically through the forest, was still a long way off. With a little subtle conniving to Craig along the lines of, 'It's really a lot closer than it looks', we continued on the uphill grind to the main ridge forming the North Razorback. On reaching the crest, wonderful views appeared, particularly to the east across the deep valley of the West Kiewa River where Mt Fainter and the Niggerheads seemed deceptively close. Our spirits hit a new high and with renewed vigour we pounded along the now very rough and overgrown fire track.

It was getting quite late; the sun was sinking in the western sky. We topped out on a small, clear knoll which gave the best views of Mt Feathertop so far. It was still some four kilometres away, however, and unless we hurried we would be overtaken by nightfall before we reached the summit. We paused only for a drink and a snack although our bodies were telling us that a longer rest, preferably in a horizontal position, would be in order.



puddings (yuk!) were weighing us down and slowed our progress along the meandering track. But the cool May air made for pleasant walking, and within two hours we reached a track junction; the point at which we had intended to begin our foray. We bid farewell to Dungey Track and the valley and veered south up Stoney Top Track. The track climbed at a gentle grade for some time, levelled out for a few kilometres, then climbed again through lovely, tall and shady alpine ash forest.

We ate lunch—some soggy sandwiches hastily prepared early in the morning—on the side of the track near a dark gully heavily overgrown with blackberries. It was

Westons Hut is one of the most rustic in the Bogong High Plains area. *Glenn van der Knijff.* Right, Mt Feathertop seen from the Fainters. *Stephen Curtain.* Pages 42 and 43, labouring up North Feathertop, with the North Razorback behind. *van der Knijff*

The rough track abruptly ended at the knoll but a good foot track guided us along the ridge in slowly failing light. The sun was still above the horizon, but it cast long, dark shadows on the track. A steepening of the grade and a thinning in the density of the snow gums indicated that we were drawing nearer to our target. A final surge up a rock-

strewn slope and we topped out on the bald and rounded North Peak. Mt Feathertop, its big brother—150 metres higher and half a kilometre further south—stood out like a beacon and guided us to its zenith.

Standing on the mountain top in the chilly evening air we watched the sun sinking behind Mt Buffalo's craggy flanks. Although we were exhausted we could not afford a long rest but food and sleep were on our minds. After a short summit celebra-



tion we took off along the ridge in the direction of Federation Hut, still a few kilometres away.

At the end of a hair-raising, limb-numbing descent we lumbered on to the grassy flats fronting Federation Hut and wasted little time in setting up camp. We prepared our dinner in less time than it took us to eat it, and were sound asleep within seconds of our heads hitting the...zzz.

We greeted the new day with a series of tired stretches and yawns. Today we were planning to camp at Tawonga Huts below the Niggerheads. While this didn't look far on the map we had been warned of the long and steep descent to the West Kiewa River, and an ascent of the same magnitude to the Bogong High Plains on the far side of the valley.

A fine but rather cold start to the day made for delightful walking conditions, and the walk to the head of the Diamantina Spur was surprisingly easy after the efforts of the previous day. Turning on to the spur we passed a charming snow-gum glade before plummeting steeply to a deep saddle. After another small climb we found ourselves standing on top of a rocky knoll which provided a grandstand-like view south and south-east over the Razorback,

with this section of track. There were numerous damp and muddy leads branching from bends in the track and on more than one occasion we headed off the main track only to have to retrace our steps, which led to frustration and a great deal of cursing. The only advantage of the horrendously steep track was that we lost altitude quickly, and it didn't seem too long before the track literally dumped us on to the West Kiewa logging road.



Machinery Spur and Mt Loch. However, any thoughts of an easy stroll to the West Kiewa River were quickly dispelled when we continued on our way down the spur, which steepened a little for about a kilometre. Then the track abruptly dropped over the edge of an escarpment and fell headlong towards the river. It was the steepest walking track on which I had ever been.

Way below us we could see the logging-scarred valley and I thought I could hear the sound of the river as it raced from the plains to the lowlands. But we didn't have time to waste on the view; all our attention and concentration were required to negotiate the steep, slippery chutes on the track safely.

It soon became obvious that we were not the only walkers who'd had difficulties

We were now some 800 vertical metres below Mt Feathertop and were faced with a 700 metre climb to the Bogong High Plains, something to which we were not looking forward, especially after the bone-jarring descent. For the first time that day, our legs having recovered somewhat from their struggle with gravity, we strode forcefully in the direction of Blairs Hut. Like our walking experience, our skill in navigating left something to be desired and we missed the turn-off to Blairs Hut. Instead, we kept on walking to a river-crossing upstream from the hut. When we realised our blunder we were not enthused about walking downstream to the hut, so decided against it and had lunch by the river instead.

I had been looking forward to a hearty meal since setting off for the day but when

After first pulling out crackers, Vegemite and cheese, I finally came upon my old enemy, the half-eaten tin of Spam. With the aid of a large quantity of water, and a necessarily hungry stomach, I was able to wolf down every remaining portion of food (including the Spam); oh, how I longed for some of mum's scones!

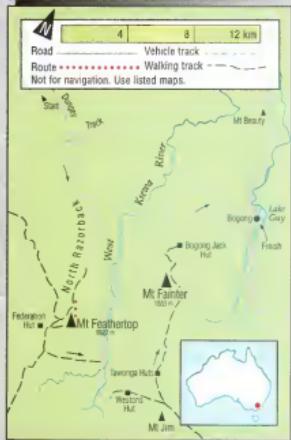
I opened my lunch-bag I lost my appetite. I still can't figure out why I brought Spam with me; I don't even like the stuff! And as for those dry biscuits...Somehow I managed to eat some of it and swore that I would look around the supermarket more carefully next time.

The start of the route from the valley to the high plains was not immediately obvious and the map provided little assistance. We bid farewell to the river and struck out along what we hoped was the right track—an old logging road which headed east past some derelict shacks (probably used as housing for loggers some years back). It inclined gently at first but gradually steepened before deteriorating into an eroded walking track, then proceeded to zigzag its way up the mountainside through a mixture of alpine ash regrowth and blackberries. On a previous walk I had discovered that I was particularly inept at adjusting rucksack straps for a comfortable fit and along this section I suffered from aching shoulders and bruised hips. Walking was slow and tiring and when we emerged from the forest the delightful setting of Westons Hut was a welcome sight. Here I was able to relieve my back of its painful load.

This old cattlemen's hut is idly situated, with a grassy clearing in front, a small creek nearby, and surrounded by snow gums. It would have made a lovely camp-site, but we were intent on camping higher up on the plain near Tawonga Huts so that we would have an easier walk the following day. A strong breeze and heavy cloud had also moved in since lunch-time; all the more reason to keep on the move.

Although we struggled up the stiff climb from the hut the stunted trees and clearing vegetation afforded a fine vista behind us to the rugged, east-facing slopes of Mt Feathertop silhouetted against the forbidding and brooding sky.

Mt Feathertop area



Rounding a bend in the track we were quite suddenly walking above the tree line on the rolling moors of the Bogong High Plains. Without the forest for protection, the cold wind chilled our bodies and tugged at our jackets; it looked as though rain was imminent. The pleasant morning had turned into a gloomy late afternoon and we scurried to the top of the plains in an attempt to beat the impending storm to camp.

Nearing a high point we could make out a number of pole lines converging on a point about a kilometre to our east. A cursory glance at the map soon told us that this point was known as pole 333 of the Alpine Walking Track. The track to Tawonga Huts starts at this point, but to save

Fortunately, it did not take long to walk this last section and I soon entered the open plain at the head of Tawonga Hut Creek. (Actually, a number of creeks draining the surrounding hills converge and join in this spout-shaped plain.) Tucked into the edge of the forest on the south-east side of the plain are some huts collectively known as 'the village' or, more commonly, as Tawonga Huts.

I followed the creek downstream for a few hundred metres and crossed it at a ford. On the far side of the creek is a large boulder which backs on to the slope behind and this seemed to be the most suitable and protected camp-site in the area, especially considering the prevailing wind and



time and energy we struck out north across the trackless plain and intercepted the Tawonga Huts track north-west of pole 333. Now, with the Niggerheads and the Fainters directly in front of us, we were within reach of our evening's camp-site.

The clouds scuttled and churned and the wind began to make those eerie, dull, whistling sounds that you hear in horror films. This was no time to dawdle. Craig was tiring somewhat and began to lag behind as I bolted down the track.

On Mt Fainter: Mt Bogong is behind. Right, Tawonga Huts. van der Knijff

the likelihood of rain to come. (Later, after reading about the history of the area, I discovered that our camp-site at the base of the boulder was actually the site of an earlier 'Tawonga Hut'—there have been many over the years—built in 1923. However, in 1986 there was no sign of its previous existence.)

Craig stumbled in shortly after and in no time we had the tent secured. The cold was becoming more and more difficult to ignore but we soon had a cosy fire crackling and we huddled by it as our dinner simmered.

I was awoken from a doze later in the evening by the sound of my pocket radio. The news it blurted out was not so good. A rather severe change for late autumn was on the way and snow was forecast for the ranges. As the next day's walk was over the exposed tops of the Fainters, this was not the sort of weather forecast we wanted to hear. We had parkas and gloves but we were not well prepared for temperatures below zero and we certainly hadn't carried gear for walking in snow! I had a restless

streams and spongy 'bogs' meant that we no longer had dry feet. We paused for a breather at the head of Salt Camp Creek before the final climb was made to the summit of Mt Fainter South—the highest of the Fainters. The main route does not pass over the top, but the summit entails only a short diversion from the track.

We returned to the track and followed it north. Where it passes to the east of the summit of Mt Fainter North the scene over the rolling plains and down into the Kiewa

lower elevations. Just before the saddle we turned east at a track junction. It was nice to be back in the sun again after walking in the deep, cold shade on the east side of Bald Hill for more than an hour.

Towards Bogong village the track seemed to drag on and only visions of food and a hot shower kept us from dawdling.

Further down the valley floor we could just make out the deciduous trees of the village through the foliage; we knew that we had only a short way to go. The walking



valley reminded me of photographs I had seen in books about the High Plains, and I felt as though I were reliving an experience from a past life. Hardly a cloud passed above us and I wondered what the weather forecasters had been 'on' when they'd issued the region's report the night before.

With rumbling stomachs we wearily entered the large clearing of Bogong Jack Saddle and rested our uncooperative bodies outside the small hut nearby. The day was pleasantly cool in the sunshine but downright cold in the shade, so we took some time to soak up the sun; after all, we didn't expect to be picked up at Bogong village for another four hours or so. It also happened to be lunch-time, so we dragged our remaining food from our rucksacks. After first pulling out crackers, Vegemite and cheese, I finally came upon my old enemy, the half-eaten tin of Spam. With the aid of a large quantity of water, and a necessarily hungry stomach, I was able to wolf down every remaining portion of food (including the Spam); oh, how I longed for some of mum's scones!

The track continued to hug the mountain side as it gradually descended towards the Springs Saddle. Forests of snow gums gave way to the tall and slender ash at

now was quite pleasant and I felt relaxed and totally at ease; the only sounds were the gentle breezes stirring the tops of the trees, the occasional screech of a cockatoo, and the crunching of our footsteps on the leaf litter covering the track. These are the sounds walkers would love to bottle and take with them when they return to the 'real world'.

We passed a small dam and a few cottages and hit the bitumen of the Bogong High Plains Road. All too soon we were recuperating at the Bogong village picnic area adjacent to Lake Guy, waiting for our pick-up to arrive. Memories of the discomfort of the walk were sent to the farthest part of my brain whence they would not (I hoped) be easily recalled. I glanced over to Craig, almost asleep on the picnic bench, and his relaxed state persuaded me to get comfortable.

Lying on the grass, I looked up at the sky through falling autumn leaves. As I, too, fought a losing battle against my closing eyes, images of our walk, the difficulties and the scenery were pushed aside by something even more powerful; the thought of a cup of hot tea and scones! ☺

The best map for this walk is the Bogong Alpine Area Outdoor Leisure Map 1:50 000 Vicmap sheet.

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night worrying about what the morning might bring.

I needn't have been concerned; the day dawned fine and sunny and there was only a light breeze at our backs when we followed the walking track as it weaved in and out of a number of small valleys. Hoar-frost and icicles clung to the sides of the track during our morning walk to Little Plain, which seemed to take a long time to reach. The scenery improved markedly as we crossed the plain, but crossing a number of



The Three Peaks

WHAT IS 'THE THREE PEAKS' TRAVERSE?

The Three Peaks traverse is a bushwalking challenge. It is not an organised event. There are no starting guns, helpers or witnesses, and the rules have never been formally established. However, tradition decrees that the successful Three Peaker:

- starts and finishes at Katoomba, where the Narrow Neck fire track (Glenaphael Drive) turns off Cliff Drive (elevation 980 metres),
- climbs Mts Cloudmaker (1164 metres), Paralyser (1155 metres) and Guouogang (1191 metres), and
- completes the trip within 48 hours.

En route he or she crosses Coxs River (twice), Kanangra Creek and Whalana Creek, at elevations of between 120 and 300 metres. The distance is roughly 80 kilometres and by the time all the various saddles and bumps are negotiated, the total height climbed (and descended) is about 5000 metres—more than half the height of Mt Everest. The route is covered by the Katoomba, Jamison, Jenolan and Kanangra 1:25 000 Central Mapping Authority maps.

For much of the way there is no track. The earlier routes took in Taros Ladders; White Dog Ridge and Kelpie Point (now out of bounds under Sydney Water regulations); Kooriecone Ridge; Mt Marooa Karoo; South- and (in part) North Paralyser Buttresses; Nooroo Buttress; Krungle Bungle Range; Gasper Buttress or Scrubbers Saddle; Breakfast Creek and Carlton Head.

More recent variants usually entail crossing Coxs River at Konangaroo Clearing on the outward or return journey or on both, so that Mt Cloudmaker is climbed by way of Strongleg Buttress and Mt Guouogang descended by way of Mt Bullagowar. The trip is most often done in the cool of winter, or in spring. Typically, you start on Friday night and make the first camp near Coxs River. At least two of the peaks are climbed on Saturday and the return to Katoomba is accomplished by Sunday evening.

Some people demand stricter rules such as that:

- the start and finish is Katoomba Railway Station;
- the three summits must be visited within one day, and
- the summit logbooks must be signed as proof of the visit.

To emulate the early trips fully, you should leave the modern contour maps at home and rely on Myles Dunphy's *Gangerang and Wild Dog Mountains Sketch Map*; leave the mobile phone and Global Positioning System receiver at home; and avoid walking on any fire track (as they did not exist in 1958). Alternatively, you might use food-supply dumps though this would be inappropriate in the Kanangra-Boyd wilderness!

Andy Macqueen reviews the history of this major bushwalking challenge in the Blue Mountains for its 40th anniversary

Blame it on Gurangatch and Mirragan—the eel and the tiger-cat. If it weren't for them, the Three Peaks challenge would entail a simple, 80 kilometre weekend walk through nice, flat forests. But when these Aboriginal ancestors had their almighty alteration they carved out all the valleys of the southern Blue Mountains. Today the Three Peaker must negotiate four one kilometre deep gorges, with steep spurs featuring sandstone cliffs and jagged, quartzite knife-edges. Three prominent peaks are encountered on the way—Mts Cloudmaker, Paralyser and Guouogang—though one could also add Bushwalkers Hill, a peak of similar height painfully ascended on the return journey.

Most of this country is in the Kanangra-Boyd wilderness—a magnificent area explored by Myles Dunphy and his friends about 70 years ago. Not that they were the first. Countless Aboriginal people lived there for thousands of years. The first white person in the area may have been the outlaw John Wilson, as early as the 1790s. Thomas Jones walked along Coxs River in 1818 while surveyor Govett explored Kanangra Creek and other tributaries in 1833. Neither man climbed the Three Peaks but Govett established that the Aboriginal name for the highest was Guouogang (pronounced 'Ku-o-wo-gang' with the 'o's as in 'wog').

While adventurous mountain bushmen probably visited the peaks from the 1860s onward, it was Myles Dunphy who heralded the bushwalking onslaught. He compiled the first useful maps, and applied imaginative place-names, such as Mts Cloudmaker and Paralyser. Through the 1930s and 1940s the 'Southern Blues' became the most popular destination for dedicated walkers. Some of these were the 'Tigers', a clique of mixed gender of the Sydney Bush Walkers, who prided themselves on their long, arduous walks. The Tigers—and others of similar ilk, such as the members of

The Warrigals—paid many visits to the peaks in the course of their arduous journeys.

The postwar years heralded a new wave of tiger walkers representing several clubs including the SBW, the Coast and Mountain Walkers, the Kameruka Bushwalking Club and the Catholic Bushwalking Club. New feats were accomplished. Some clubs developed their favourite event: the CBC held an annual mystery marathon; some SBW members started to do a punishing weekend 'hundred miler' from Hilltop to Katoomba, while other walkers prided themselves on walking from Kanangra to Katoomba (and sometimes back again) in a day.

In 1958 a new challenge appeared. Geoff Wagg invited fellow SBW members to accompany him on a weekend walk (under 48 hours) from Kanangra to Katoomba by way of Mts Cloudmaker, Paralyser and Guouogang. But his plans were white-anted: another member, John Manning, proposed a variation—to start and finish at Katoomba. Others were attracted to Manning's plan despite Wagg's protestations that it was impossible, so Wagg gave in and joined them.

The first Three Peaks effort thus went ahead in the winter of 1958 led by John Manning, aged only about 20 but renowned for his walking strength and navigation prowess. Others in the party, mostly SBW members, were Wagg, Mick Elphick, Barry Higgins, Freddie Worrall, Mick Peryman, 'Snow' Brown, Doug Dunnnett—and two others who dropped out along the way. They were all Tigers, and some later achieved notable feats: Higgins, for instance, did the first full traverse of the Western Arthurs, and recently walked the entire Great Dividing Range.

For most of the party the trip was a huge success, even for the sceptical Wagg. They had all set out from Katoomba with the absolute minimum of gear, their packs weighing less than seven kilograms (achieved partly because some had previously

Whalanian Deep and Davies Canyon from Nooroo Buttress. Andy Macqueen



made food-supply dumps along the way. All wore Volley sandshoes, the favourite footwear for experienced bushwalkers around Sydney. Manning led all the way, the party breaking up into dribs and drabs at various stages. While the trip has been done much faster in recent years, some of the party's times for particular sections may still stand as a record.

In 1958 neither the Narrow Neck nor White Dog Ridge fire tracks existed, so the Friday night walk was on track or pad only. By about midnight the party had descended to Coxs River at Kelpie Point—having followed silver milk-bottle tops which they had previously fixed to the trees. Camp was broken before dawn. They

followed Coxs River upstream, then charged up Kooriecone Ridge, negotiating the cliffline at Gentles Pass, and reached the top of Mt Cloudmaker for morning tea.

From here the two drop-outs found their own way back to Katoomba. The rest made the precipitous plunge over Mt Marooba Karoo and down Thunder Buttress, where some allegedly used the maximum impact bushwalking technique of leaning back into a dragged pole, to aid balance and limit velocity!

With a long way to go yet, they hopped along the rocky Krungle Bungle Range (stopping only to repair sandshoes with string and sticking-plaster), over Mt Jenolan and down to Coxs River. From there they went up Breakfast Creek, up the spikes on Carlton Head and began the final slog back along Narrow Neck. The party was a sorry sight, strung out a long way, some wearing socks over their sandshoes to hold them together. But when it came to the end the leaders waited for the laggards and the

Abusing the wilderness?

Tiger walking is dangerous and irresponsible. Its proponents don't care about nature or conservation!

Such views were widespread among bushwalkers even in the 1950s. Many considered with some justification that bush marathons had more to do with machismo than with bushwalking. Most of us have been guilty at some stage: we have been attracted by the adventure of a long, fast or otherwise challenging walk. Indeed, many dedicated conservationists first came to the bush as young, adrenalin-driven adventurers. Does a bush marathon have an unacceptable impact?

This question is particularly relevant to the Three Peaks as much of the route now lies within the Kanangra-Boyd wilderness. Fortunately, few people tackle the trip and they travel light, thus their impact is small compared, say, with the hordes walking from Kanangra to Katoomba. However, if there were to be a major influx of Three Peakers, the situation would change. Eroded tracks would begin to appear in parts of the route and the National Parks & Wildlife Service might be forced to consider restrictions.

Whether or not it is appropriate to do the Three Peaks also depends on the participants' skills and attitude. This is not a City to Surf, or a Six Foot Track Marathon. It is a tough bushwalk, much of it untracked, over scrubby, rocky, unstable—and wondrous—terrain. Sound bush-navigation skills are required. Rescue is expensive and difficult. Parties should be small, with every member self-reliant.

Above all, the Three Peaker must empathise with the wilderness, experiencing and accepting the environment on its own terms. The Three Peaks should not be a human-against-nature undertaking, nor a person-against-person race: it is strictly a personal challenge.

The mountain-top logbooks expose the attitudes of many who write in them. Those who typically record their response to the terrain or the weather with derisory expletives are not welcome. Fortunately, no such people have been undertaking the Three Peaks.



By early afternoon they were all on Mt Paralyser (except for Peryman, who had walked round the mountain instead of over it in order to pick up his food dump down the valley). Then down they plummeted off the side of North Buttress, controlling their descent of the scree-ridden slope by wildly grabbing at passing stringybarks. With great relief they reached Whalania Creek, where Wagg just missed the sight of Famous Higgins (commonly FH) sitting naked for three minutes waist-deep in the icy waters'.

Four of the party pushed straight on up Mt Guouogang but the others rested for a while, nursing blisters and knee aches, before tackling it in fading light. In Wagg's words: 'The great white moon, already well clear of the earth, foretold the day's end as we toiled upwards on the twisting, spiny ridge that lay like the scaly tail of a dragon, who slept while we St Georges took him in the rear.'

Indeed, an ascent of Nooroo Buttress, the highest continuous ridge in the Blue Mountains, is a remarkable experience. It is almost 1000 metres from bottom to top, interrupted only by a couple of tiny saddles: in places the jagged quartzite crest narrows almost to a knife-edge, with sheer drops on the side.

Reunited on the summit, the party settled down for the night as mist rolled in ominously. But the morning dawned fine.

Some of the first Three Peaks team on Donjon in the Budawangs c 1958: John Manning with his arm round Mick Elphick, Geoff Wagg behind the stick, and 'Snow' Brown far right. Geoff Wagg, right, Meg Hailstone (McKone) before she became the first female Three Peaker. Frank McKone

whole party took the momentous step on to the bitumen of Cliff Drive simultaneously.

Since then, countless walkers have tried to emulate that first trip. Many have failed, their efforts unrecorded, but many have succeeded. Most are satisfied just to meet the 'under-48-hour' criterion; some have turned it into a speed event. One such person was Ray Jerrens, a CMW member. He was on the second successful Three Peaks trip, in May 1961, with Wif Hilder and Heather Joyce (now White). Jerrens was aged 19 and this was only his fifth bushwalk.

The trio was running late by the time it reached Mt Cloudmaker. Leaving the others behind Jerrens struck out on his own, crossing Mt Paralyser and ascending Mt Guouogang by nightfall—a remarkable undertaking as he was unfamiliar with the route and did not have a map! On Mt Guouogang he could not get his matches to light and, having to forgo his dried soup and stew, dined on Vegemite dissolved in a

cup of water. Jerrems reached Katoomba at 2.30 pm the next day; his overall time was about 40 hours and 30 minutes. Hilder and Joyce had pulled out at Whalan Creek.

The following year Hilder and Jerrems were at it again, together with CMW members Meg Hailstone (now McKone), Frank McKone and Dave Philip. This time it was Hilder who 'did a Jerrems' near Mt Cloudmaker, striking out on his own. He reached the Mt Guouogang summit by nightfall. When Jerrems, Hailstone, Philip and McKone got there the next morning they were greeted by three carrots—perhaps a comment from Hilder on their need to see in the dark.

Hilder reached Katoomba first. However, the others also completed the trip and Hailstone became the first female Three Peaker. Only 18 at the time, she had not undertaken any training—just a few runs round the block'. She recalls how they had to cross the partially flooded Coxs River by forming a human chain; and that they constantly thought they would not succeed but at each stage 'they'd just push on and do the next bit'. She also recalls that her pack weighed only about six kilograms and that their food was 'horrible'—a sort of primitive muesli before anyone had heard of muesli, and scroggin, which was nuts and raisins set in chocolate. The experience was especially memorable in the lives of Meg Hailstone and Frank McKone: a few years later they married.

Many women have succeeded as Three Peakers since then including Aine Gliddon of the YMCA Ramblers, whose main handicap was having to assist her ailing husband. That was in 1979 when, Gliddon recalls, the Ramblers was a very macho club and the Three Peaks challenge was not regarded as something for women. Another successful female was CMW member Sue Hope, who completed the trip with three males in 1967. She was training for Tasmania, where she and her friend Helen de Clifford became the first women (and the second party) to do the rugged 100 kilometre return trip to Federation Peak from the Arve road in a weekend.

There has never been a completely successful all-female party or solo female Three Peaker though Carol Pereira (now Isaacs) from the Springwood Bushwalking Club and the Sydney University Bush Walkers and Denise Black, also from the SUBW, came frustratingly close in 1968 with a time of 48 hours and 15 minutes. They deserved to succeed. Pereira had just left school, and most of the route was new to both of them. They did it in reverse, negotiating the hazardous chains on Carlon Head in the dark. Their memories include battling scratchy mountain holly and bivouacking on South Paralyser

Buttress where they 'ate camp pie with great gusto'.

There have been other all-female attempts. In 1965 five SUBW women aborted the trip after they became temporarily bushed near Mt Cloudmaker. They were met on the mountain by two male SUBW members, Athol Abrahams and the appropriately named Dave Dash, who were doing the trip in one day—the second party to do so.

The first attempt to do the Three Peaks in a day was made by Rick Higgins of the University of NSW Bushwalking Club together with Jerrems. It was in 1962, the weekend after Jerrems had been in the party with Hailstone. Fatigue got the better of them at Konangaroo Clearing, but in



1964 or 1965 Jerrems successfully completed the day-trip with CMW colleague Ray Perich. Starting from Katoomba at 2.30 am the pair finished in 20 hours and 30 minutes.

Jerrems was quite an athlete: In 1970 he ran from Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair in 11 hours and 38 minutes. But he had his rivals: two other CMW tiger walkers, Warwick Daniels and John Fantini. In 1966

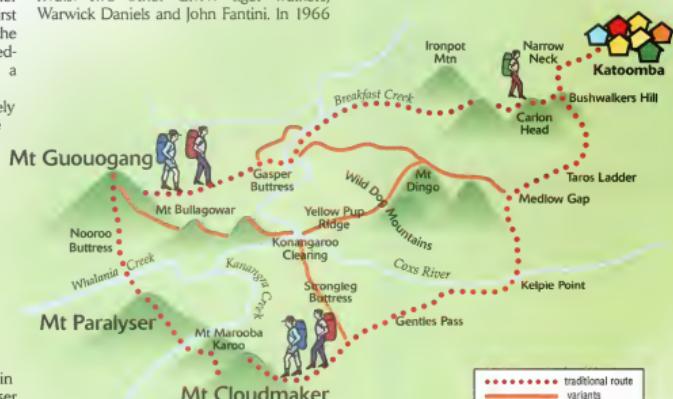
Jerrems set out with them to break his own Three Peaks record. Jerrems pulled out but Fantini and Daniels went on, running most of the way, to create a new record of 18 hours and 22 minutes.

That record was unbroken for 16 years until Peter Treseder, famous for a tremendous number of wild feats—most recently as one of a trio to walk to the South Pole—came along. He had done the trip in the classic 48-hour manner, but in 1982 he ran the whole trip solo in 16 hours and 30 seconds. Then, five years later, he managed the extraordinary time of 14 hours and 30 minutes. On both occasions he went by Yellow Pup Ridge, Strongleg Buttress, Gasper Buttress and Carlton Head. Though he ran most of the way, he regarded it as a fast, low-impact bushwalk. He was totally self-sufficient, carrying just thermals, a rain shell, energy food and a water-bottle. (See the profile of Treseder in *Wild* no 51.)

Meanwhile other bushwalkers, mere mortals, have been content not to establish speed records but to do the trip many times, inspired by the personal challenge and their great love for the area. These people invariably come from bushwalking clubs with an established Three Peaks tradition.

Judging by the mountain-top logbooks during the last two decades only four parties have done the 'proper' trip each year (though others climb the peaks from Kanangra Walls or Green Gully). Usually each party comprised only one, two or three members. The SUBW has featured most prominently by far on the 'proper' trip.

Chris Grose (SUBW) has completed the trip 15 times, usually solo. Once he encountered torrential rain and pea-soup fog the whole way and was barely able to ford Coxs River on the return trip. Dave Noble (first of the SBC, then of the SUBW)



has done the trip 16 or 17 times and is still doing it, usually in company. At present his strategy is to travel by way of Konangaroo Clearing both ways, so the peaks are ascended as a round trip from there. For hardy walkers like these, the trip is enjoyable: it is not entirely an exercise in masochism. There is time to take in the scenery, notice the wildlife and break for a swim in Coxs River.

The oldest Three Peaker has been Gordon Lee, SBW member and long-time president of the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs of NSW. About 1980, then in his mid-50s, he embarked on the trip with 40-year-old Bill Capon following a \$100 bet by fellow walker Bill Burke. Burke lost his money.

At the other extreme, perhaps the youngest party has been a group of schoolboys in 1994—Keith and Geoff Macqueen (aged 14 and 17, respectively), David Wood (15) and Luke Graham (15). However, they missed genuine success when, after climbing Nooroo Buttress to reach the rim of Mt Guuogang in the dark, they were too weary to search for the trig station among the mallee before heading down over Mt Bullagowar. A successful young Three Peaker was 16-year-old Lukas Matysek, a member of a 1977 SPAN bushwalking party. His chief memory



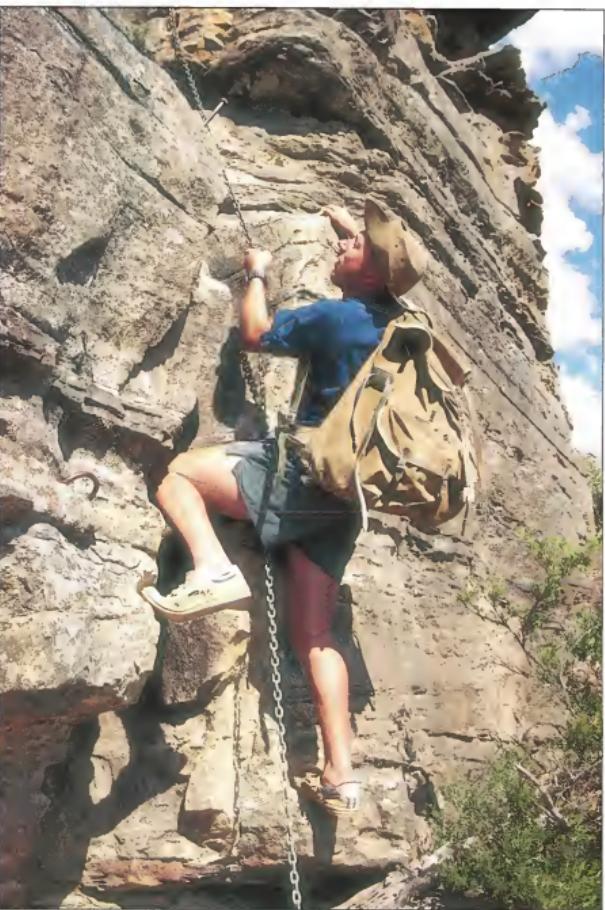
John Manning, leader of the first Three Peaks trip, crossing Coxs River in 1958. *Wagg, Right, Carlton Head, the last major climb of the trip. Macqueen*

is the explosive end: he had been dreaming of a strawberry milk shake all the way—and when he finally scooted one down in a Katoomba café, he had to rush out and throw up on the pavement.

With so many people doing the trip during its 40-year life it is a wonder that there has not been a serious accident. But there have been plenty of gammy knees, and a few close shaves. In 1966 CMW member John Duruz was bivouacking solo while high on Nooroo Buttress when a snowstorm came in. He backed down and walked to Katoomba in freezing conditions,

journey by candlelight. *It must have been a still night!* Editor!

Such hazards are part of the challenge. Like all wilderness walks, the Three Peaks should be undertaken with a sense of discovery and adventure. It is irrelevant that many have been there before you, and that you have Buckley's chance of beating the record time.



with snow on the ground. He was incredibly weary but if he had stopped he would have frozen.

The next year Michael Smith and another member of the KBC encountered Coxs River in full flood. They were not put off. 'Packs were wrapped up and our naked bodies swam that muddy torrent in an uncanny version of the side-stroke.'

The exercise had to be repeated on the way back, the delays causing the two to be overcome by darkness near Mt Dingo. With torch batteries now flat, they completed the

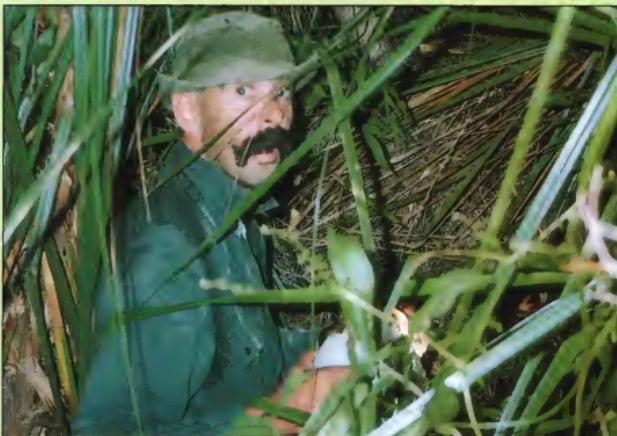
Research sources include writings by Wagg (*Sydney Bush Walker*), Philip, Rick Higgins, Duruz, Blayden (*Unto the Blue*), Smith, Dunnert (*Kamensko*)—and conversations with Black, Cosgrove, Barry Higgins, Hilder, Isaacs, Jennings, Lee, Keith Maxwell, Meg McKone, Noble, Treseder, Flora Terton, Wagg, and others.

Andy Macqueen has been an enthusiastic bushwalker since the 1960s. A member of the Springwood Bushwalking Club and former president of the Confederation of Bushwalking Clubs of NSW, he teaches outdoors guides about the bush, and writes bush history. His publications include *The Life and Journeys of Barralier and Back from the Brink: Blue Gum Forest and the Great Wilderness*. Although he has not tried the Three Peaks he has walked the area many times.

Walking a fine line

Maps show the Victoria-New South Wales border from the headwaters of the Murray to the coast as a simple line. On the ground it's a very different story.

By Peter Langtree



having been a bushwalker for many years and done countless off-track navigation walks, I have always been fascinated by the straight line which separates Victoria and NSW, from the source of the Murray River to the coast at Conference Point near Cape Howe.

Looking for a new challenge and something to get my teeth into, I often wondered what it would be like to traverse from mountains to coast following this mystical borderline. But rather than just throw a pack on and do it, I thought it would be rather interesting and fun to try to find out how, when and from whom this line was derived.

Not being a researcher, I wasn't exactly sure how to begin but I thought the library might supply a starting-point. This was where I found that the survey was done by a couple of surveyors named Alexander Black and Alexander Allan. This survey started in 1870 and was completed by 1872. It was basically done in two stages. Black started from the source of the Murray near Forest Hill and completed his section to the Delegate River at Allans Peg. Black took 11 months to complete his part and covered a straight-line distance of 61.5 kilometres of extremely difficult terrain which included the formidable section from the Snowy River to Mt Tinganerry.

Lunch stop deep in the swamps of Nadgee.
All photos Bernie Egan

Alexander Allan proceeded from Allans Peg and surveyed the line to the coast at Conference Point, a distance of some 114 kilometres, which took 18 months.

These surveyors built rock cairns along the Victorian and NSW borderline and I wanted to find them and check their condition. But where were they?

So it was off to the Surveyor General's office. My very patient and understanding wife Jenni accompanied me. (I really needed Jenni to show me how to turn the computers on.) We photocopied the original workings of Black and Allan from microfilm from which I could plot the grid references of the rock cairns onto my modern maps.

When I started work on this mammoth task I found that all distance measurements were taken from a datum or starting point which was from the source of the Murray. Unfortunately for me, all these measurements to rock cairns were done in links and I said to myself 'What is a bloody link?' On looking up my old, faithful encyclopaedia I soon found that a link is a term of measurement which equals 7.92 inches. This did not

really help me because I had to convert masses of links into kilometres and metres somehow to find the position of these—what were becoming very elusive—rock cairns.

I then rang an old engineering mate, Chris Yeoman, and asked him whether there was a formula to convert links to metres. Chris told me to multiply links by 0.201168. Once I had this magic formula I was able to convert Black and Allan's old workings to my maps and plot the position of the cairns.

The Black and Allan borderline walk from Willis on the Snowy River to Mt Tingaringy was always going to be hard. The terrain in this area is forbidding, with mountain range after mountain range rolling on until they meet up with the cliff-faces of Mt Tingaringy,

I asked about water in the area and he told me that the creeks would probably be dry but always to walk south and we should get to small pools of water. I mentioned that I had a trip report of a small group who walked the area ten years ago. David told me that since that time fire had ravaged the region and then the heavy dogwood had sprung up.

This information was filed away and the maps were pored over again. The next person I contacted was Rod Deakin, a surveyor with the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and a very capable bushwalker.

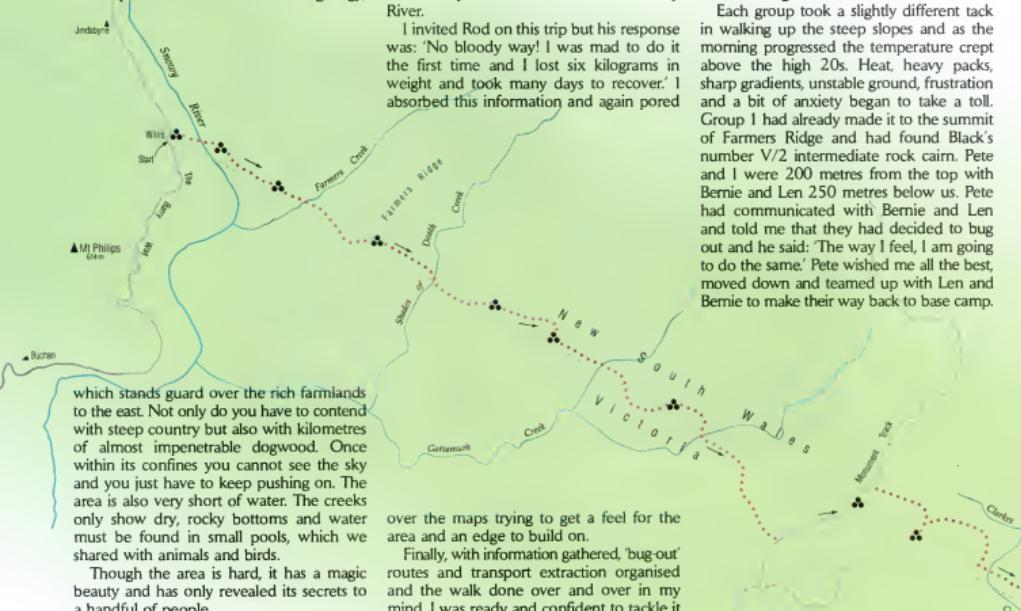
He had led that group through ten years earlier and had also accompanied us on our first-stage borderline walk from the head of the Murray River to Willis on the Snowy River.

I invited Rod on this trip but his response was: 'No bloody way! I was mad to do it the first time and I lost six kilograms in weight and took many days to recover. I absorbed this information and again pored

instructions gone over; in particular, if anybody wanted out, Farmers Ridge would be the first bug-out point and people could return to base camp on the Snowy River.

We split into three groups and headed through the foothills of the Snowy River area to the next cairn, which was 1.1 kilometres away. All three groups reached here and a quick check with the calculator showed that we were covering 900 metres an hour—a reasonable pace on the type of ground we were traversing. The groups met up again at Farmers Creek, which hadn't had a drop of water in its bed for many years and here we had morning tea and studied the exceptionally steep terrain which we would have to negotiate to get to Farmers Ridge and another rock cairn.

Each group took a slightly different track in walking up the steep slopes and as the morning progressed the temperature crept above the high 20s. Heat, heavy packs, sharp gradients, unstable ground, frustration and a bit of anxiety began to take a toll. Group 1 had already made it to the summit of Farmers Ridge and had found Black's number V/2 intermediate rock cairn. Pete and I were 200 metres from the top with Bernie and Len 250 metres below us. Pete had communicated with Bernie and Len and told me that they had decided to bug out and he said: 'The way I feel, I am going to do the same.' Pete wished me all the best, moved down and teamed up with Len and Bernie to make their way back to base camp.



which stands guard over the rich farmlands to the east. Not only do you have to contend with steep country but also with kilometres of almost impenetrable dogwood. Once within its confines you cannot see the sky and you just have to keep pushing on. The area is also very short of water. The creeks only show dry, rocky bottoms and water must be found in small pools, which we shared with animals and birds.

Though the area is hard, it has a magic beauty and has only revealed its secrets to a handful of people.

Planning for a trip like this takes many hours of poring over maps, trying to gather as much information as possible, contacting people who live in the area and then piecing it all together to come up with a feasible plan of attack.

One of the people I contacted was David Ingram, who was born and bred in the area and who works for the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources. I told him what I intended to do. There was an embarrassing silence on the end of the line and then he said: 'Do you realise that there are sections with dogwood and acacia so thick that not even the dingoes can survive and there is not much water out there, and the mountains are so steep?' I listened, then said: 'Our group has already walked the borderline from Cowombat Flat to Willis.' Silence again and then he slowly said: 'If you have walked that, I think it is possible you could get through to Mt Tingaringy.'

over the maps trying to get a feel for the area and an edge to build on.

Finally, with information gathered, 'bug-out' routes and transport extraction organised and the walk done over and over in my mind, I was ready and confident to tackle it with a group. It was time to advertise in the Orion Club's *Bushwalking Newsletter* and to my amazement we had seven takers: myself, Len Tonn, Ray Maine, Chris Donald, Wally Bate, Peter Ablett and Bernie Egan.

On the morning of 3 January 1997 the seven of us waded across the Snowy River with packs weighted down with six days of provisions and three-and-a-half litres of water. We made our way to Black's number five primary survey cairn on the eastern bank of the Snowy River. That cairn was in excellent condition and still had the original side timbers. This was the last bit of sizeable flat ground we would see for the next five days. Our first day's walk was only 4.6 kilometres but we would have to climb over three mountain ranges and walk a vertical height gain of 1160 metres and negotiate some slopes with angles of 40°. So it was little wonder that the group was anxious. Radios were given out and final

We were only four hours and two kilometres into our walk and half the group had bugged out. This would possibly be a record and indicates how difficult and steep the walk was—and this was the easy stage. We still had five more days of the same and harder ahead of us.

I felt great admiration for Len, Pete and Bernie. It must have been a hard decision to return but they are all very experienced and would have weighed up many options to reach that decision.

I moved up to Farmers Ridge and found Ray, Chris and Wally, who were having lunch in a saddle under some scant shade trees. The mood was sombre as we ate. Seven of us had started off and now we were only four. It was beginning to feel like an Agatha Christie murder mystery. If one more were to pull out, we knew that the trip would be off and we would all have to bug out.

As we ate, deep in thought, I looked at the blokes around me. They were exceptionally fit, very adaptable to hard, off-track walking; they were excellent team members but could think and work alone when necessary and if any team was going to make it to Mt Tingarinya it would be this one.

With packs on we moved off Farmers Ridge heading on a magnetic bearing of 104° down to a creek aptly named Shades of Death. It was an interesting walk for we had to negotiate large sections of rock scree slopes which tinkled like broken glass and shifted under the weight of our feet. Once past this section it was back into heavy bush until we finally reached the Shades of Death Creek. The creek was bone-dry, however. We dumped our packs and walked south with empty wine-cask innards and water-bottles. After a while there was an excited shout from

Chris. 'Water, there's a small pool of water.' We all drank thirstily and collected five litres each; it didn't matter that there was a wombat skull at the bottom of the pool.

We returned to our packs. Our camp for that night was only 1.1 kilometres away on top of a knoll at Black's number V/3 intermediate cairn. The only down side was that we had a vertical height gain of 500 metres in that short distance. We moved up very slowly and had many rests, for Chris was not feeling well as a result of food he'd eaten the night before.

We were aware of the necessity to keep up a good intake of fluids and adhered to that, but we had had an exceptionally physical day. This was our first day out and it takes some time for the body to adjust to carrying a pack. I said to Chris: 'We have all the time in the world, you rest when you

We made radio contact with the base camp and were told that Len, Bernie and Peter had arrived and were enjoying their second bottle of a very good, full-bodied red.

Our first day had been hard both physically and mentally. It is quite difficult to walk away from a place with good water, amenities and probable safety and go into an area with many unknown variables, especially in regard to water. Having found water in the Shades of Death Creek I was quietly confident that we would find more of the precious liquid in similar places. So as we sat around eating our evening meal we planned for the next day and worked out where we were likely to find water.

With packs on and walking out of our first night's camp—Ray up front, Chris next, Wally and I taking the tail—we knew that we were doing something very special which only a handful of people had ever experienced. This country, though hard and steep, is absolutely beautiful.

On this day we had to cover 6.4 kilometres, a vertical height gain of 822 metres, and find two intermediate rock cairns.

We walked along a narrow ridge for almost a kilometre and found the spur which would take us down to Black's number V/4 intermediate rock cairn. This cairn has a circumference of 4.8 metres and is about 900 millimetres high. We followed the usual practice of jumping over the imaginary line, shouting 'I'm in Victoria, now I'm in NSW, now I'm back in Victoria'.

Water, or lack of it, played a large part in making decisions on this walk. We had enough at this stage but would have to find replenishment. We pushed off from this cairn on a 104° magnetic course, walking the borderline down some good, steep country into another dry creek. Again we dumped packs in the dry creek-bed, walked south along the creek and found a shallow pool of tannin-coloured water that was more like a puddle. The four of us stood around this bit of liquid as though we were at a wine tasting. Each of us first had a smell of the water's bouquet, then we put a little into the mouth, swirled it around and spat it out. The overall consensus was that it was good water even if there were some protein floaties in it. Since it passed the smell- and taste test we filled up with five litres each and returned to our packs.

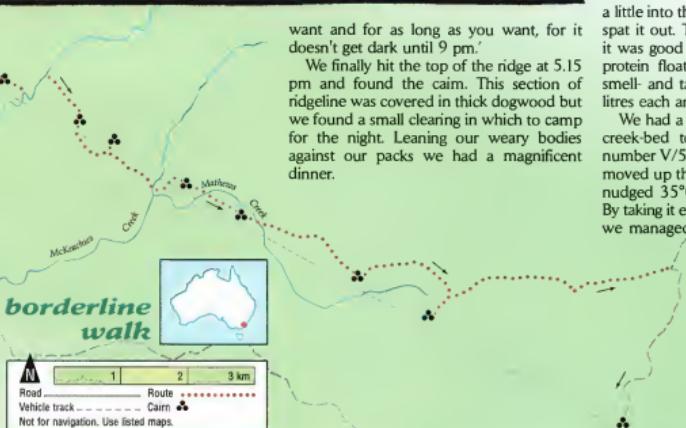
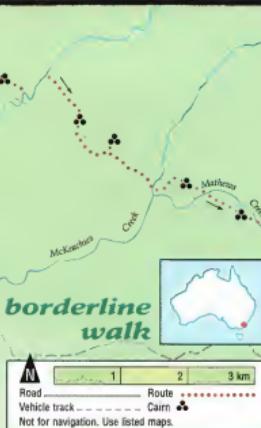
We had a 1.4 kilometre climb out of this creek-bed to the next ridge and Black's number V/5 intermediate rock cairn. As we moved up the steep slopes the temperature nudged 35°C and sweat poured from us. By taking it easy and drinking plenty of water we managed in fine style. As we climbed

THIS ISN'T WHAT I IMAGINED
WHEN YOU SUGGESTED A HOLIDAY
TO CAIRNS...

anjellon

want and for as long as you want, for it doesn't get dark until 9 pm.'

We finally hit the top of the ridge at 5.15 pm and found the cairn. This section of the ridgeline was covered in thick dogwood but we found a small clearing in which to camp for the night. Leaning our weary bodies against our packs we had a magnificent dinner.



we were lucky enough to find a brumby pad which zigzagged its way up to the ridge we wanted. At the top we checked the maps, found the rock cairn and had a long lunch and a snooze under shady trees to the noisy hum of small bush flies which seemed to enjoy Ray's company more than ours and as long as he was close by they didn't bother us. (We should have nicknamed him Mr Mortein... 'when you are on a good thing stick to it'.)

Our planned night's camp was to be somewhere up on a huge ridge with a track called Monument Track running along it. From where we sat having lunch it was only three kilometres away as the crow flies, and there were two ways to navigate to this mammoth ridgeline. One was to stick to a string of ridgelines which wound around in a semi-circle, eventually linking up with the Monument ridge. The other was to plunge down into the valley of Gattamurh Creek, find a spur and navigate to the Monument ridge. In fact we only had one choice as, again, water dictated the terms; we would have to lose height and descend into Gattamurh Creek. With packs on we pushed slowly down the steep, uneven slopes, each of us silently cursing that we had to go down and abandon the easy option.

We came to our first heavy dogwood on this section, which made life rather interesting and was quite a pleasant diversion from the sharp gradients. On reaching Gattamurh Creek we found it bone-dry but it was an exceptionally pretty place with small, grassy, flat areas where brumbies grazed-fringed by paper-barks of melaleuca and with the coloured, dry rocks of the creekbed, the place had a mystical feel about it. Small birds were flying around and we knew that water must be close so we followed the creek down and found a good pool. With the water that we drank and loaded into our containers we pulled out more than 30 litres of the precious liquid.

We would have a steep, hot climb out of this valley and we weren't likely to get more water until lunch-time the following day, so each of us collected about eight litres and ignored the weight involved.

With our water-laden packs on we found the spur we wanted and pushed up slowly. The beginning of this spur was very steep and open and you could feel the heat still radiating off the ground even at 5 pm.

I could see Ray, Chris and Wally 80 metres higher up the spur having a 'packs-off' rest and rather than move up to them I plonked down on the ground by myself. I needed my own space and to muster something out of somewhere to keep going. I knew that I was in good physical condition and as strong as a mallee bull, so it had to

be a mental thing. Maybe this was the feeling people have when they say they've hit the wall. I thought, here I am in beautiful country doing something I enjoy, and I can't seem to do it. Suddenly I said to myself 'bugger it', threw on my pack and moved up the spur past the guys who I could tell were concerned for me, and I said: 'Don't worry, I'm okay.' I moved higher and higher up the spur and just kept lifting one leg after another.

I went through the mental barrier and felt good. I knew that nothing would stop me. It was a high feeling.



Near-perfect cairn built by Alexander Allan on the Victoria-New South Wales border. Near right, blazed tree marking the border. Far right, the borderline walkers on the border at Conference Point, Cape Howe.

Ray, Chris and Wally caught up and we all had a 'packs-off' rest. There was a close feeling amongst us as we shared our highs and lows in this great wilderness. We pushed higher up the spur and got into very thick acacia. The way Ray pushed through and broke track for us was brilliant. Chris was great with his youthful enthusiasm and Wally was an inspiration with his doggedness and determination.

Wé'd had an extremely hard, 13-hour day but a very rewarding one and we all had a tasty dinner, many laughs and a good sleep under a star-studded sky.

On day three as we walked along Monument Track in the early morning

coolness towards Black's number six primary survey cairn we were all in good spirits and pleased to be able to walk at four kilometres an hour. But little did we know that at day's end the temperature would be nudging 40°C, that we would encounter thick, suffocating sections of dogwood and that we would be out of water. Sometimes it is best not to be able to see into the future.

We found Black's number six cairn easily because it was in the middle of the track and was in excellent condition. From here we pushed along a ridge for a kilometre to the spur which houses Black's number VI/1 intermediate cairn. We returned to the ridge trying to delay as long as possible the time when we would have to walk against the grain of the country. As we walked further along this ridge we were engulfed in extremely thick acacia scrub with a height of about three metres, a trunk thickness of 50 millimetres and sharp, dry, short branches which ripped at skin and clothing. Once in the confines of this tortuous section visibility was no more than one-and-a-half metres and we could not pick out any land features at all. We had to find a specific spur line and it was painfully obvious that we would have to do some serious navigation. Ray and Chris would do the compass work; Wally and I, the distance pacing and we would allow extra paces to accommodate the type of terrain we were traversing. As we slowly pushed our way through the heavy vegetation, Chris and Ray would yell out: 'Are we there yet?' and our reply would be: 'No! Keep going, keep going.' Finally Wally and I yelled: 'Stop. We are here.' With packs off and resting we changed our compass bearings to take us down the invisible spur for we could not

see anything in this maze of thick acacia. Ray diplomatically said, 'I think I will check the position with the old GPS' and within 90 seconds the GPS unit located its satellites and spat out an eight-figure grid reference which coincided exactly with where we were sitting. It was nice to know that we hadn't lost the old, primitive art of pacing.

The four of us walked down the spur to Clarkes Creek and we were back on the borderline. With the temperature rising into the high 30s we were running very short of water and the only water we found was a pool of green, putrid sludge. We took note of where it was and decided to push on in the hope of finding something a little more palatable. Luck was with us for we ended up at small pools of clear water in a re-entrant and we each filled up with five litres.

We found that with the heat and hard walking we were drinking 1.25 litres of water a kilometre. With this quantity of

liquid we found that we could easily cope with the heat and the steep climbs, and none of us was under any physical stress. We pushed onwards on a 104° magnetic course, walking up the side of spurs, over the top and down into re-entrants, and up the side of spurs again. Reaching Black's number V1/2 intermediate cairn we had lunch and the usual ritual of relaxing and snoozing under the shade of trees. Walking across the grain and pushing through sections of thick dogwood we were averaging 600 metres an hour. Though this might seem slow it was an excellent pace for the type of ground we were traversing and would be the equivalent in physical output of walking at over five kilometres an hour on normal tracks.

As we pushed further towards Black's number V1/3 cairn we were engulfed in an extremely heavy section of thick dogwood and the only way of getting through was to keep low and crawl on hands and knees. This sapped our energy and with the temperature nudging 40°C our bodies were lathered in sweat and dry dogwood leaves. When we finally reached the top of the spur and found Black's number V1/3 cairn we were all in need of a good rest and



Wally and I had a sleep and a snoring contest for half an hour to the amusement of Chris and Ray.

We had four more spurs to cross to get to Black's number V1/4 cairn and as we crossed over each one we would mentally mark it off the list. With the heat and the dogwood the going was hard and finally, late in the afternoon, we reached the fourth spur and the cairn. Resting in the shade of a wild cherry we drank the last of our precious liquid. The talk centred on Tingaringy Creek (which we believed was full and flowing) and how we would swim and lie in it and drink copious amounts of its water. So with packs on and excitement brewing at the prospect of seeing a flowing creek we

moved down the heavy undergrowth on the side of a spur and slid down what the map calls a contour bank into a beautiful, rocky, coloured, DRY creek-bed. Chris, who rarely swears, dropped the magic word. 'Damn, it's bloody dry.' The others looked at me and all I could say was, 'I guess some bastard pulled the plug'. When in doubt, walk; so we walked up Tingaringy Creek and eventually came to many splendid pools of cool, clear water and had a magnificent night camped in a wonderland of coloured rock and muted bush.

Day four was great. It was physically easy and by pure chance we stumbled into a sumptuous rock gorge at McKeachies Creek. This gorge had large rock steps and at the top of each step were pools of cool, clear water in which we all swam. It did not take us long to trade our sweaty bushwalking clothes for birthday suits and become

by day's end. However, the mighty Mt Tingaringy was putting in a last-ditch effort to beat these four human invaders who dared to tame its mighty domain. With the wind getting stronger, fingers began to chill and I could sense that the group just wanted to get there—to have it over and done with. So all day we pushed on without a rest and finally we reached Mt Tingaringy Track with mixed feelings of extreme relief and a sense of immense exhilaration. Yes! We had made it. The group had made it to Mt Tingaringy. We had become a team.

The Black and Allan line between Forest Hill and Conference Point was completed in six walking stages. Our main purpose was to research and find every cairn site along this line. We reached all sites except one on this mammoth journey.



members of the *where r we* tribe. We all wished we could camp here because it was really a delightful spot but our mission was to get to Mt Tingaringy. So with disciplined minds we pushed on, found more of Black's survey cairns and pulled into our planned camping area of Mathews Creek. Unfortunately, this was covered in thick dogwood, so we camped in the dry creek-bed. We spent our time here soaking in the shallow pools, drinking coffee and exploring up and down Mathews Creek accompanied by small birds which hovered near our faces and probably wondered who these strange, two-legged animals might be.

Evening came and with it Murphy's Law which states 'when camped in a creek-bed, rain will always come' took over and it poured by the bucket load. Fortunately, the creek did not flow but sleep wasn't easy.

We woke to day five with low cloud scudding past, rain, wind and a temperature of just 4°C, a huge difference compared to the 40°C heat of the previous days and our bodies definitely did not like this sudden change. With packs on, we moved out of camp at 6.15 am. The boys put on a cracking pace as they moved up the spur lines. If all went well we would be at Mt Tingaringy

Each section posed challenges of different kinds as vegetation and gradients changed. We learned a lot about gear—what stands up to the incessant rigours of off-track walking and what doesn't—and a lot about ourselves and how members of a good team can gain strength from one another.

We found that adventure can still be had, and that life can be simple even now; water, shelter, food and friendship are all you really need.

On 30 December 1997 we broke out of the coastal swamps of three metre high sword grass and walked down the massive sand-dunes to the last cairn at Conference Point. As the gentle, cooling breeze from the Tasman Sea washed over our weary bodies, we could hardly believe that our journey had ended, and there was a feeling of great achievement—but also of sadness—that it was all over.

The best maps to use when walking in the area covered by this walk are the Suggan Buggan and Tumbong 1:25 000 Central Mapping Authority sheets.

Peter Langtree has been a bushwalker and an outdoors instructor for many years. He is associated with the year eight outdoors programme at a boys' school in Melbourne and is a member of the Federation of Victorian Walking Clubs—search and rescue section. He manages a bush navigation business.

My waterproof

Roger Caffin considers wh...

You always get a bit wet in heavy rain regardless of what sort of jacket you are wearing, especially when you keep lifting your arms and the water runs back inside. However, we were getting just a bit too wet, and in only light rain. Although our jackets were Gore-Tex we were getting wet all over. We began to wonder whether the Gore-Tex membrane was still working. Time to get the jackets checked—but how?

In fact, if you have questions about your Gore-Tex jacket you can get W L Gore and Associates to check it out, generally without cost to you. They boast a lot about the superiority of their material and they are prepared to back it up. I arranged to take our jackets to Gore in Sydney, where I was able to watch them being put through a formal testing process. Very interesting.

It transpired that our nine-year-old jackets were leaking through countless Blue Mountains thorn holes all round the shoulder regions. Too much heavy scrub. And the 'durable water repellent' coating had worn off completely. The message seems to be that you should use your jacket either for rain-wear or scrub-bashing—but not for both—and you should look after the DWR coating.

How do you get your jackets tested? First of all, before sending it to Gore, the garment has to be clean, dry and have your name, address and telephone number attached, together with a request for testing and any information about suspected problems. Send them a dirty jacket and they will either send it back or have it dry-cleaned at your expense—according to health and safety regulations. (Come on, be fair!) In principle the testing applies only to garments made after 1992 when the 'Guaranteed to keep you dry' labelling started. However, if they aren't too busy they may look at older stuff—as they did with ours. At present you stand a good chance that Gore will pay for the postage back to you although that might have to change if they get swamped with requests.

Their first step is visual inspection. They look at the outside of the jacket for damage—holes, rips and abrasions, for example. Fading from ultraviolet rays doesn't matter too much although the reds and yellows do fade more than the darker colours. They inspect the inside for dirt and mildew, which are sometimes found. They look at all the tape seams to see whether any have started to peel off. Finally, they hold the jacket up to a strong light to look for holes made by thorny scrub and sticks. Our jackets passed this stage okay.

Their next step is to check the DWR coating on the fabric. This coating, a factory-applied fluoro-polymer, is meant to make the water roll off in beads and is the first

line of defence. If the outside fabric gets wet when it starts to rain the surface will get cold from evaporation, and condensation may begin to form inside. The fabric may still be waterproof, but you will get wet and cold from your own sweat.

To test the DWR coating they pick a critical area such as the shoulder and clamp it on a stand. Then they spray 250 millilitres of water from a fixed height on to the fabric. It may bead and roll off, or it may wet the fabric. Finally, when all the water has fallen, they compare the wet surface with some standard photos to see how much DWR coating is left. Our jackets got

move on to another area. Typically, they test several key seam areas, the shoulders and the arms. Our jackets leaked a little bit at the seams but not enough to worry about. However, around the shoulders there were indeed a few small leaks—about one hole per square inch, in fact. A few didn't leak so much as squirt high in the air.

What can you do when you find problems with your Gore-Tex jacket? Well, the jacket manufacturers can do repairs for you and there are two authorised repair companies as well—Remote Equipment Repairs in Melbourne and

I'M AFRAID THIS JACKET IS A LITTLE PAST RECONDITIONING...



very wet and scored zero out of five: no DWR coating left at all.

Their last test is to see whether the membrane actually leaks under pressure. Gore claims that its membrane will withstand 65 pounds per square inch (psi), which is a lot of pressure, without leaking. However, if thorns have poked holes in it you are going to get water coming through. They clamp an area of the material over a sort of funnel and pressurise the underside. The fabric bulges up alarmingly—I thought it would burst! It turns out that the test is done at only three psi, which is quite a low pressure, and the bulging was due to the fabric creeping in at the edges. All quite normal and harmless. Anyhow, if there aren't any leaks after a short while they

Venus Repairs in Sydney. You can contact them through your local bushwalking shop. If there are just one or two small leaks in the jacket Gore may put patches on them without charge but that depends on their workload. You can also buy do-it-yourself Gore-Tex patch kits at your local bushwalking shop although they are not cheap. Sad to say, our jackets were beyond repair.

If the fluoro-polymer DWR coating has suffered you can restore it yourself. First of all, if there is enough coating left on the fabric it can be rejuvenated by a hot tumble-dry or a hot iron. Just make sure that you don't melt the fabric: no guarantees there! This is worth doing at least once a year after you have washed the jacket (you do wash it, don't you?) If the

jacket leaks!

ight be the problem



coating has completely rubbed off—as was the case with ours—you can replace it. Gore strongly recommends you use a fluoro-polymer spray rather than a silicone spray on Gore-Tex for three reasons: silicone sprays tend to attract smells and stains too often; they do not last very long; and, most importantly, silicone doesn't stick too well to the original, factory-applied fluoro-polymer. For the same reason, once you have put silicone on a jacket you can't put fluoro-polymer over the silicone.

There are several well-known brands of fluoro-polymer sprays on the market: Grangers (Superpruf and Extreme) and Nikwax (TX.Direct Spray-On Version 2 and TX.Direct Wash-In), and now Gore has released its own spray called ReviveX. This has been designed to be most compatible with the original factory coating, but I think all brands work fairly well. In general you spray the stuff on, let it dry and then give the jacket either a hot tumble-dry or a hot iron to bond and activate the stuff. How much you use depends on the state of the jacket.

What about other types of material? Macpac uses Reflex and Gore-Tex for its jackets: Reflex is another three-layer material, similar in construction to Gore-Tex but with a different membrane. Macpac essentially offers the same repair service through either itself in New Zealand or through Remote Equipment Repairs. Reflex also has a fluoro-polymer DWR coating so the same story applies. There are a couple of other, similar materials on the market (Chameleon, for example) and the same applies to them too.

Two-layer nylon/polyurethane materials with a smooth inside surface can be repaired with some sort of sticky, waterproof patch on the inside. We repaired some Peter Storm waterproof overpants with cheap nylon patch material manufactured by Coghlan's, bought at our local bushwalking shop for a few dollars. That worked very well. I've used the same stuff on tent floors with equal success. Your local bushwalking shop can sell you stuff to reproof japara, or you can even do it yourself with linseed oil. The commercial

Play it safe; take a brolly as well. *Will Steffen*

stuff gives a dry finish and doesn't smell too much, which can't be said for linseed oil! However, I don't expect proofed japara to be as good as the modern, membrane-based material. The older, cheap, 'proofed-nylon' material is not worth the effort once the coating on the inside begins to break down. Unfortunately, the same applies to the proofed Cordura from which so many rucksacks are made: once the proofing on the inside starts to peel it leaks like a sieve.

So we bought some new, lightweight jackets for alpine use, and reproofed the old, heavy ones for scrub-bashing in the Wollemi in winter. 

Roger Collin, a consulting research scientist, has bushwalked for most of his life. He lives on the outskirts of Sydney and spends every summer walking and canyoning in the Blue Mountains, every spring and autumn walking in the Blue Mountains and the Australian Alps, and winters trying to find enough snow to go ski-touring.

TO LOG OR

Why the Greens should rethink their policy on forests, by Patrick Moore

At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and recently at the Earth Summit +5 in New York, climate change, biodiversity, and forests have emerged as the top three items in the global environmental agenda. Governments, with the support of the environmental community, have been able to hammer out agreements on the first two. The Climate Change Convention calls for a reduction in greenhouse-gas emissions, particularly of carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels. The Biodiversity Convention calls for the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity. For purely environmental reasons, I agree strongly with the aims of both these conventions.

There was no agreement on forests, however, because there is too wide a gap among countries on what such an agreement should contain. Some countries are concerned mainly with forest-management issues and sustainable forestry while others are more concerned with conservation, protection, and the prevention of deforestation. While mainly concerned with the preservation of forests, the environmental movement initially voiced strong support for a convention.

In the wake of the Earth Summit in 1992 the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests was formed under the UN Commission for Sustainable Development to pursue the idea of an international agreement on forests. The panel held four meetings in Geneva and New York between September 1995 and February 1997. By the fourth meeting it had become obvious that any international convention must deal with the subject of forest management as well as with preservation. As proof of their real agenda most of the environmental groups reversed their position and came out against an agreement. Greenpeace referred to it as the 'Chain-saw Convention', as if to say it would be fine to have an agreement as long as it banned cutting down trees.

Partly as a result of this sudden about-face, the international community remains in complete confusion regarding global policy on forests and forestry. I believe this is because the environmental movement's position is misleading, illogical and, most importantly, inconsistent with its more reasonable policies on climate change and biodiversity. In fact, its forestry policy is

diametrically opposed to its policies in these other areas and is therefore an anti-environmental policy.

The environmental movement's opposition to forestry is squarely based on its contentions that it is the main cause of forest loss (deforestation) and of biodiversity loss (species extinction). The movement's facts are wrong on both charges.



Timber industry spokesperson Patrick Moore. Photo Moore collection

The Food and Agricultural Organisation of the UN, which is responsible for both agriculture and forests, defines deforestation as 'the permanent removal of forest cover and conversion of the land to another use such as agriculture or human settlement'. It estimates that 95 per cent of deforestation is caused by clearing for farms and towns, not by forestry. This makes sense because the whole purpose of forestry is to grow trees, that is, to keep the land forested. Forestry causes reforestation, the opposite of deforestation. (See photo on page 62. Editor)

Both the World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace have stated that logging is the main cause of species extinction. Yet they are unable to provide the Latin name of a single species that has become extinct due to forestry. *IA dead bird is just as dead if you do not know its Latin name.* Editor! The truth is that species extinctions are generally caused by deforestation, hunting and introduced species of predators and disease,

not by forestry. Why do these groups accuse forestry of causing extinction? I don't know their precise motivation, but consider the question from another angle. If logging forests is not responsible for species extinction, what other good reason is there for opposing it, provided it is done in a sustainable manner?

Based on these two false allegations, the movement has adopted a policy that would result in a major reduction in the use of forests as a supply of wood. It argues—unfortunately with apparent logic—that by drastically reducing the harvest of trees the forest will be saved along with all the creatures that live in it.

How could we reduce wood consumption? First, it is important to note that fully 50 per cent of all wood used in the world is burned to supply energy for cooking and heating, mostly in developing countries where the people cannot afford fossil fuels. And that is probably good because if they could, it would only add to greenhouse-gas emissions and climate change. The environmental movement has been surprisingly quiet on this major use of forests even though unsustainable gathering of wood for fuel is a major cause of deforestation in the tropical countries.

The environmental agenda for the reduction of wood use is two-pronged. First, they want us to stop making paper from trees and to use 'non-wood fibres' to make 'tree-free paper'. Some of the candidate crops are hemp, kenaf, cotton and wheat straw. This may sound good at first but there is a serious problem. Where are we to grow all these exotic, annual, monoculture farm crops, enough to provide 300 million tonnes of paper a year?

Unfortunately, we would have to grow them where we could grow trees. It simply makes no sense for groups who say their main concern is the protection of biodiversity to advocate massive monocultures where there could be forests. It's not as though there is a huge surplus of extra land in the world. Therefore, the environmental movement's position on paper production is diametrically opposed to its position on biodiversity. Birds and squirrels prefer trees to hemp farms.

Continued on page 62

NOT TO LOG

Why the Greens' policy on forests should be supported,
by Geoff Law

Patrick Moore opens his defence of the logging industry by blaming the conservation movement for the absence of an international treaty governing the management of forests. But such a treaty already exists. Moore refers to it himself. It's called the Biodiversity Convention.

The Biodiversity Convention was negotiated in the early 1990s. Most major developed countries, including Australia and the USA, are signatories to it. The convention's aim is to secure the future of the variety of natural life-forms on this planet, whether they are found under the sea, on grasslands, in deserts or in forests.

It's not a 'greenie's' prescription for banning all forms of development either. As well as provisions calling for reserves such as National Parks, the Biodiversity Convention has large sections outlining how sustainable development of resources should be carried out. It is a recipe for exactly the sort of international cooperation on forests that Moore appears to endorse.

So why have a separate treaty on forests alone? Perhaps Moore has answered that question through his own advocacy for it.

The primary focus of a forests convention would be wood production. Its advocates within the UN and its member governments are the resource-based agencies. The implementation of the provisions of such a treaty in Australia would be the responsibility of Australia's federal Department of Primary Industries and Energy. This is the department which has consistently advised government ministers to issue more and more wood-chip-export licences. On the ground, the treaty's provisions would be implemented by State forest services such as Forestry Tasmania. These are the people who have planned the wood-chipping of native forests and the destruction of wilderness.

A forests treaty would not only supplant the Biodiversity Convention. It would also weaken it.

So from a conservationist's point of view, why make redundant a balanced and flexible treaty that already enjoys significant international support? Why not simply implement the provisions of the Biodiversity Convention? Why have an international treaty that allows accelerated clearing of old-growth forests?

Which brings us to Moore's contention that the environment movement is 'wrong' about forestry contributing to deforestation and loss of biodiversity...

Moore's article fails to mention two crucial things: old-growth forests, and plantations.

Any sensible discussion of forest biodiversity must draw the distinction between these two extremes. So why does Moore fail to do so? Perhaps it is because the supposed logic of his argument relies on blurring that distinction.

Old-growth forests are the driving force behind the forest debate in Australia. Old-growth forests are dynamic, living ecosystems; they provide the habitat required



Conservation spokesperson Geoff Law. Rob Blakers

by so much of our native wildlife; their protection is essential to maintain biodiversity. Old-growth forests also meet important human needs. In them, we can find tranquillity; we can experience awe; we can enjoy fresh air and clean water; we can reconnect with nature.

Plantations are at the other end of the arboreal spectrum. They are crops of trees planted in straight lines to allow easier extraction by machines. Their overriding function is the production of wood. The trees are cut down after a fraction of their natural lifetimes, sometimes as early as after 15 years, to provide fibre for making paper, or timber for building. They often consist of exotic species. But even plantations of native trees can't replicate native ecosystems. They bear as much resemblance to a native forest as a fish farm does to a coral reef.

Forestry causes reforestation...

Moore claims that 'the whole purpose of forestry is to grow trees, that is, to keep the land forested. Forestry causes reforestation, the opposite of deforestation'.

Unfortunately, the aim of much of Australia's forest management is to convert old-growth forests to plantations. In other words, forestry frequently causes *deforestation*.

Even when forestry services try to 'regenerate' a native forest after logging, the results often fall way short of the rhetoric. The clear-fell-and-burn method common in the wet forests of southern Australia, for example, produces even-aged trees that lie closer to the plantation end of the spectrum than to old growth.

Under the guise of this sort of 'sustainable forest management', more than a million hectares of Australia's forests have already been turned into plantations. Hundreds of thousands of hectares more have been clear-felled, burnt and 'regenerated'. These actions have been imposed on a forest base already halved by agricultural clearing, with most of the remainder at least partly degraded by selective logging, grazing, unnaturally frequent fires, and feral animals and plants.

But worse is planned. In 1996 federal Primary Industries Minister John Anderson announced the government's intention to triple the area of plantations in Australia by the year 2020. Many of those plantations will replace existing native forests. The government's policy of removing restrictions on the export of wood-chips will accelerate this trend.

This will have a massive impact on Australia's forest biodiversity.

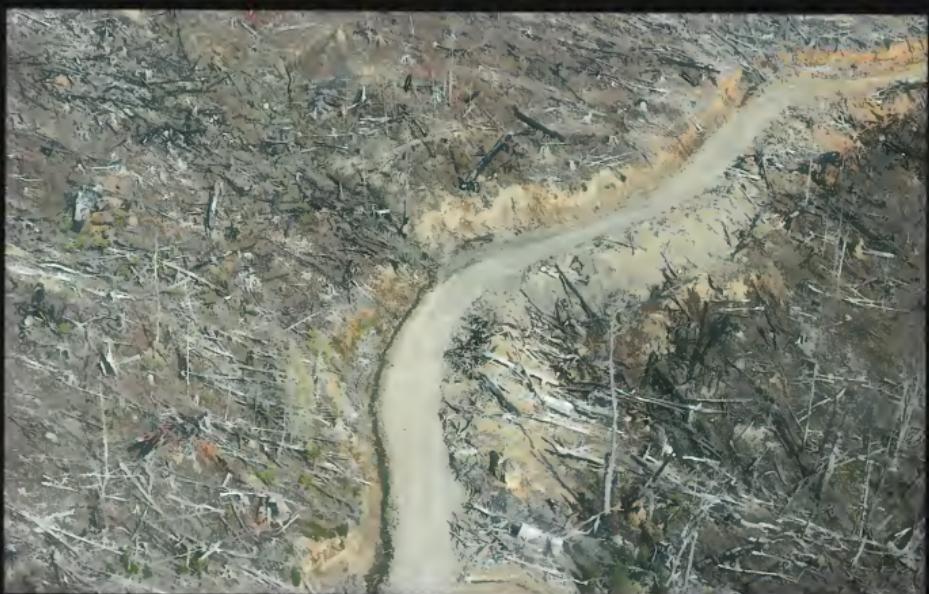
Species extinctions are not caused by forestry

Moore bases much of his criticism of conservationists on the claim that the environment movement can't name a species which has become extinct solely because of forestry. This is a simplistic and short-sighted approach.

It is simplistic because there may be forest-dependent species that were eradicated by logging before we even had a chance to identify them, a quite likely scenario as far as some of the lesser-studied insects and fungi are concerned.

It is short-sighted because it was only in the late 1960s that large-scale clear-felling-and-burning operations got under way. Thirty years are a tiny fraction of the natural lifetime of most of our native trees. Lifetimes of forests are usually measured in hundreds—and sometimes in thousands—of years. Similarly, modern-day forestry has been applied to a fraction of the planned

Continued on page 63



Continued from page 60

The plain fact is that if you don't use wood to make paper, there is less reason to grow trees.

Secondly, the movement wants to reduce wood as a building material and substitute it with so-called 'environmentally appropriate alternatives'. Just what are these alternatives? The only viable substitutes for wood as a building material are steel, cement, plastic and bricks. All these materials require a great deal more energy to produce than wood. Why? Because wood is renewable and is made mainly with solar energy in a factory called the forest. All these substitutes are non-renewable and have severe environmental impacts of their own. And, most significantly, because they require more energy they inevitably result in more carbon-dioxide emissions from fossil-fuel use and therefore contribute to climate change. Again, the so-called environmental position on the use of wood runs directly opposite to the position that would support a responsible climate change policy.

All resource use has environmental impacts but wood is the most renewable material we use and forestry is the most sustainable of all the primary industries that supply us with our materials. It is time the environmental movement recognised the basic contradictions in its policy on forests and forestry.

There is a simple way to bring the environmental movement's policy on

forests in line with its policies on biodiversity and climate change. The fundamental requirement is to take the focus off reducing the use of wood and to put it on increasing forest cover and productivity. This means growing more trees, changing the millions of hectares of unused and inefficiently used farmlands back to forests, and reversing deforestation in the tropics. It means using our international assistance budgets to help developing countries to grow their fuel-wood in a sustainable manner and in the end it means using greater quantities of renewable wood and smaller amounts of non-renewable steel, cement, plastic and fossil fuels.

It does not make sense at all for environmentalists to be in favour of renewable energy such as solar and wind while at the same time being opposed to renewable materials that are produced by solar energy. This is the case whether the material is used for fuel, such as ethanol being made from sugar cane and wheat; or for fibre—for example, cotton, flax and wood-chips—or for building materials such as timber.

From the point of view of preserving biodiversity there is no doubt that trees are the best of all crops—forests provide more habitat than any other environment. Trees are also best when it comes to making a positive contribution to climate change; they are the greatest absorbers of carbon dioxide, and, as mentioned above, the use of wood results in lower carbon-dioxide emissions from fossil fuels.

'...the whole purpose of forestry is to...keep the land forested.' (Florentine valley, Tasmania.) Geoff Law

Many environmentalists seem to forget that there are 5.9 billion people on this earth who wake up every morning with real needs for food, energy and various materials. Over the past 10 000 years we have helped to satisfy those needs by gradually clearing away about 30 per cent of the world's forests and replacing them with farms and pastures. This trend must be partly reversed if we want to protect biodiversity and prevent climate change. It cannot be reversed by the idealistic notion that if we stop using wood the forests will be saved.

Thinking people will eventually come to realise that the present policy on forests of most of the environmental movement is, in fact, an anti-environmental policy. The movement is entrenched in its position, partly because it is very shallow in forest science, and partly because the policy has been so effective as a fund-raiser. A major effort is needed to give the public and our political leaders a more logical, internally consistent, science-based perspective on the issue of forests. I intend to be part of that effort and I know that I've got my work cut out. ☺

Patrick Moore is a Canadian ecologist and a founding member of Greenpeace. In 1995 he published *Pacific Spirit—the Forest Reborn*. He was sponsored by the National Association of Forest Industries when he came to Australia in May.

total area. We are therefore only in the very early stages of a massive experiment on our forests. To conclude now, in the face of numerous warning signals, that the results are benign is both premature and irresponsible.

We already know that many species are vulnerable to forestry. *The Ecological Future of Australia's Forests*, produced for the Australian Conservation Foundation by scientists including Jamie Kirkpatrick and Tony Norton, lists several species whose future is in doubt. Most of them need old-growth forests threatened by logging at present. They have all suffered drastic reductions in their populations. Some have been eliminated from parts of their former range—that is, they have become 'locally extinct'.

They include mammals such as the eastern quoll (*Dasyurus viverrinus*), extinct in the south-eastern forests of continental Australia and now confined to Tasmania; Western Australia's numbat (*Myrmecobius fasciatus*) and woylie (*Bettongia penicillata*); the long-footed potoroo (*Potorous longipes*); Victoria's Leadbeater's possum (*Gymnobelideus leadbeateri*); and the Tasmanian bettong (*Bettongia gaimardi*).

The same report also identifies amphibians, reptiles, bats, cockatoos, parrots, birds of prey and small arboreal marsupials such as the squirrel glider as being potentially at risk. As for the less cute and cuddly snails, spiders, butterflies, beetles and stream crustaceans—who knows?

But Harry Recher from the Edith Cowan University in Western Australia predicts that some species will become extinct because of forestry. He believes that we face a massive wave of extinctions of bird species over the next 50 to 100 years. This is because the impacts of accelerated clearing, logging and chipping operations will be exacerbated in forthcoming decades by likely changes in the earth's climate. The frequency of fires will increase. Forest environments could become drier, eliminating some fungi and invertebrates on which larger forms of life depend for food. Populations of native birds, plants and animals will become fragmented and isolated from each other by roads, logging and plantations. As these scattered populations decline, species become genetically weaker in the face of other pressures. Extinctions follow.

Is Moore suggesting that we should wait until it is too late before acting to prevent extinctions? It was this type of approach that caused the Tasmanian tiger to become a protected species in 1938—two years after the last known specimen died in a Hobart zoo.

Environmentalists want us to stop using trees

So what's the solution? Is the only alternative, as Moore suggests, to build houses out of steel and concrete? Or to clear even more forests to plant hemp?

No, the alternative is to use trees—plantation-grown trees. From our existing

million hectares of plantations! As we've already paid the ecological price for establishing these tree farms, why not make the most of them?

Moore has made an unpardonable error in claiming that conservationists are seeking to ban the use of wood. It is true that conservationists have encouraged the use of alternative fibres such as hemp. Such crops could be established on existing agricultural land. But for the last two decades the Australian conservation movement's major thrust has been to advocate the use of our existing plantations. Or to establish more of those plantations, where required, on land that requires reafforestation.

A report by forest-economist Judy Clark, funded by the Australian Government in 1995, found that almost all Australia's needs for paper and building timber could be met from our existing plantations by the year 2000. She found that as the plantations established in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s mature, the number of trees ready to be cut down will increase dramatically. With this burgeoning alternative supply of wood key areas of old growth and wilderness could be protected immediately.

The problem is that the Australian logging industry is all geared up to consume the old-growth forests. Why pay more for plantation-grown wood when State governments and forest services will sell public native forests at bargain-basement prices? In Tasmania, for example, a sawmiller pays \$28 a cubic metre for plantation-grown pine, but only \$24 for the same amount of high-quality eucalypt cut from the old-growth forests of South-west Tasmania (so-called Tasmanian oak).

So what's happening to the plantation-grown wood? Unfortunately, more and more of it is following the shipments of native-forest wood-chips to the Northern hemisphere. In 1996 Primary Industries Minister John Anderson revealed that the licensed export of unprocessed wood from Australian plantations totalled over four million tonnes. In Tasmania over the last four years one plantation-grown tree in three has been exported as either logs or chips. All this is in addition to the six million tonnes of wood-chips from Australia's native forests that are exported each year.

Many have criticised the practice of exporting wood-chips on purely economic grounds. The export of a raw product means that very few jobs are created in Australia. Some have advocated the creation of paper-mills to process the wood-chips here. But instead, we've started exporting whole logs! Next we'll be selling the plantations themselves to foreign corporations. (Don't laugh. Privatisation of Tasmania's State-owned plantations is now the policy of the State Government.)

Environmentalists should support increased tree cover

The conservation movement agrees with Moore's statement that the trend of clearing forests must be reversed in favour of restoring tree cover where it has been lost. But most

native-timber companies are not implementing this recommendation. Instead, there has been an unprecedented acceleration in logging and clearing of remnant native forests. It is fuelled by deregulation of international trade. All government restrictions on the exports of logs and chips from plantations were removed in early 1997. And, State by State, controls on the export of native-forest wood are being dismantled. The result for our forests could be horrifying if we just sit back and let this happen.

'Many environmentalists seem to forget that there are 5.9 billion people...'

Moore reminds us that there are 5.9 billion people on earth, whose demands for resources are escalating. Our governments do not need reminding of this fact. But they see it only as an opportunity for more economic growth. On that basis, they have overcommitted Australia's native forests to the production of wood for export to Asian markets. But do we really want this? Wouldn't it be more far-sighted and rational to say, 'No! Enough is enough'?

Concluding comments

On ABC Radio in Hobart in early 1996 Moore debated the Wilderness Society's Bob Burton. Moore contended that he supported the protection of wilderness, rainforests and old-growth forests.

Yet we are still witnessing the logging of wilderness in places like South-west Tasmania and East Gippsland. Rainforests in and around Tasmania's Tarkine are being cut or cleared. And all over the continent—from the karri forests of Western Australia to the subtropical mountains of northern New South Wales—old-growth forests are being lost, and biodiversity with them.

Moore has not said anything about these crucial issues. Why not?

Can it be because Moore, a Canadian, actually has quite a history of association with the Canadian logging industry? In 1991 he was appointed as a director of the British Columbia Forest Alliance, a lobby group funded by logging companies. The *O'Dwyer's PR Services Report*, a public-relations journal, described this alliance as the creation of Burson Marsteller, a PR firm that specialises in company-funded 'grass-roots' campaigns. This company's clients have included Union Carbide during the Bhopal disaster; the Argentinian Government when it was a military junta; and the Nigerian Government.

This same company has advised the Australian National Association of Forest Industries and its front group, the Forest Protection Society. These groups hosted Moore's tour of Australia in 1996.

Bushwalkers throughout Australia can see with their own eyes the actual impacts of the industry he is defending.

Geoff Low first came into contact with native-forest logging in 1974. Since 1985 he has been a forest campaigner and has worked for the Wilderness Society, the ACT and the Tasmanian Greens. He is the Environmental Advisor to Australian Greens Senator Bob Brown.

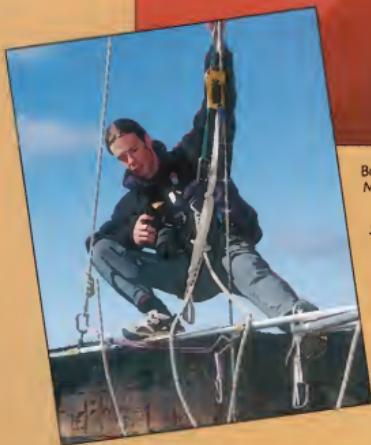
Light on the land

Dawn and dusk at the places we love, by *Simon Carter*



Feeding time,
Mt Buffalo, Victoria.
Right, dawn,
Coles Bay area,
Tasmania.





Bushfire sunset from the Horn,
Mt Buffalo.

Simon Carter is a 31-year-old freelance photographer. A very experienced and accomplished rockclimber, in recent years he has also been Australia's most prolific rockclimbing photographer. His coffee-table book, *Rockclimbing in Australia*, will be released later this year.

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Skiing the Bogong High Plains

Day tours in Victoria's best cross-country skiing area, by *Martin Meyer*

Containing spectacular alpine scenery, Victoria's highest mountains and historical cattlemen's huts, the Bogong High Plains region has some classic Australian ski-touring. The undulating terrain is ideally suited to the tourer, with a large area to explore and a great variety of skiing—from beautiful snow-gum forests and ice-encased creeks to the freedom of high, exposed plains and ridgetops.

My own association with the area began at a very early age; indeed, it formed my first experiences of skiing and of the outdoors generally. Beginning with a dink on the back of my grandfather's skis, my skiing progressed through many years of day and overnight touring in the back country, in addition to the not infrequent 'Tele' down freshly covered slopes.

The following trips are derived from these explorations and form an introduction to the Bogong High Plains for those new to the area. In particular, these tours focus on the more accessible north-eastern section of the park, with the considerable south-western plains left for skiers with the inclination and experience to explore them later.

When to go

The Bogong High Plains receive and hold some of the best snow cover in the State and consequently they present the longest period in which skiing is possible. Generally speaking, the best time to visit the area is between July and September, particularly later in the snow season when the weather is more stable and the days are longer. For

those in search of the endless winter it is also worth noting that snowdrifts in some of the higher bowls and south- or east-facing slopes can survive well into spring and even early summer, supplying a last taste of the white stuff before the long wait sets in.

Warnings

While most of the skiing on the High Plains is not technically difficult it cannot be regarded as entirely 'easy'. These trips primarily focus on skiers with some previous experience. The main factor in this is the weather, which is a significant danger



the trips

at a glance

GRADE Moderate

LENGTH Day tours with overnight options

TYPE Snow-gum glades, moderate slopes, exposed peaks and historical huts

REGION Bogong High Plains

BEST TIME Winter/early spring

SPECIAL POINTS

Be prepared for all weather conditions, particularly for bad weather

and can make things unpleasant for inexperienced or ill-equipped parties. Nevertheless, this is a large area of relatively easy and extremely rewarding skiing.

As in all alpine environments, the weather on the High Plains should not be underestimated and can change very rapidly and with surprising force. Even on the most idyllic of blue-sky days parties should be prepared for poor conditions with warm and waterproof clothing. If it looks as though a white-out or bad weather is approaching it is usually advisable for less experienced groups to shorten their trips, particularly in those areas above the tree line, and to try again another day. It is also good practice to let someone at home know of your intended routes and return times, as well as to sign into (and out of) the intentions books.

Maps

All the tours described in these notes are well covered by the *Bogong Alpine Area Outdoor Leisure Map 1:50 000* Vicmap, which spans the entire Bogong High Plains

area. For more detail the *Nelse* and *Cope 1:25 000* Vicmap sheets can also be used.

Access

The Bogong High Plains section of the Alpine National Park is best approached through the alpine resort of Falls Creek, about 350 kilometres north-east of Melbourne. From the south, travel along the Hume Freeway and the Snow Road to Myrtleford and continue on the Happy Valley road to reach Mt Beauty and, finally, Falls Creek. If approaching from the north, travel south along the Hume Freeway and turn off at Wodonga, then proceed along the Kiewa Valley Highway. From Melbourne the trip takes about five hours, or about one-and-a-half to two hours from Wodonga.

During the snow season it is compulsory to carry snow chains on the Bogong High Plains road. They can readily be hired *en route* if necessary. Resort fees are also payable for entry into the Falls Creek area.

To reach the Windy Corner Nordic area, the starting point of the described tours, continue along the Bogong High Plains

road past the bulk of Falls Creek, where the road terminates in a day car park at the Windy Corner day shelter. Ski hire and hot food are also available here.

Ropers Lookout

Overlooking Falls Creek is a basalt outcrop on the north-east side of Rocky Valley, which supplies a short and slightly adventurous day's skiing. Known as Ropers Lookout, the knoll is a volcanic plug and marks what was once a local eruption point. For most of the way the skiing is of beginners' standard, following the groomed trail system along roads and aqueducts. However, the short, final section up to the lookout is steep and unmarked; it requires hill climbing, descent and navigational skills.

Beginning at the Windy Corner car park, ski along the Bogong High Plains road, which now forms the main Nordic trail. This contours round the west side of the valley before reaching the practice slopes and the groomed, flat area of the Nordic bowl. Continue along the road as it skirts round the bowl before gently descending to the dam wall of Rocky Valley Storage.

Forming the main water storage of the Kiewa Hydro-Electric Scheme, the dam often develops an ice crust during winter. But as the frequently audible cracking sounds attest, the ice is thin and unstable, and it is best to keep off it (skiing on the ice is prohibited).

Continue across the top of the dam wall, passing a plug-hole-like structure which forms the dam's spillway. On the far side is a small information stand and intentions book, which should be filled in before you continue.

From here contour northwards round to the beginning (the end, actually) of the Rocky Valley Aqueduct, one of several watercourses constructed to increase the catchment area of the dam. Follow the aqueduct, which is marked by numbered snow-poles ringed with black and corrugating blue, as it winds through snow-gum forest for about a kilometre before ending in a creek gully two poles after pole 4400 (the last two poles are unmarked).

Leaving the aqueduct and groomed trail system, turn right after the first pole and continue up on the left side of the gully in a north-easterly direction, a steepish section which requires the use of herringbone and sidesteps as well as the odd kick-turn. A reasonable snow cover is also useful here to avoid the underlying scrub. Once the gully opens up and flattens out continue up on the left side to the head of the gully.

From here pass left through a gap in the trees on the ridge line, where a snow-pole signposted 'Ropers Lookout' should be visible about 50 metres to the southwest. At the second pole take a bearing on 240° magnetic and head through the trees for about 125 metres, to bring the



Spring skiing on Heathy Spur. Chris Baxter



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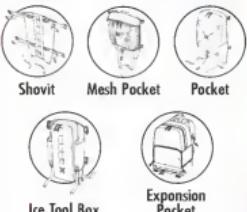
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marked Ropers Lookout into sight a short distance away.

At the lookout enjoy the good views of Rocky Valley Storage and the valley below. Behind Falls Creek, Mt McKay and its fire tower are in view, together with the Fainters on the horizon. For the return journey retrace tracks to the dam wall and Windy Corner car park.

2 Edmonson's Hut and Mt Nelse

Scattered throughout the High Plains are numerous cattlemen's huts, originally designed for use as temporary bases during the autumn cattle round-ups. Although cattle are now excluded from the eastern half of the park these huts still perform a valuable service for walkers and ski-tourers, providing an interesting destination as well as welcome shelter during less favourable conditions. One of the more accessible huts is Edmonson's Hut, which can be combined with an ascent of the broadly rounded summit of Mt Nelse—Victoria's third-highest mountain—for a ski tour with great variety.

Begin as for Ropers Lookout but instead of turning off the Bogong High Plains road after crossing the dam wall continue along it for about two kilometres until you reach Watched Creek, marked by a water-level measuring station on the upstream side of the road. Budding prospectors may be interested to know that the creek is named after a gold watch that is supposedly embedded in the creek-bed, dropped by cattlemen William Wallace when his horse stumbled during a round-up.

From here either cut across to the pole line visible at the base of the trees in an easterly direction or continue along the road round the next bend and turn north-eastwards on to the signposted Mt Nelse Track, which runs next to the pole line (note that this is marked as the Big River Fire Track on the *Bogong Alpine Area Outdoor Leisure Map*). Follow this round a wide, open curve to the left and into the trees before you reach an intentions book at a locked boom gate across the road. A hundred metres further along the trail an iced stream trickles down the slope on the right. This is a good place to stop for a drink and to refill water-bottles.

Continue up the pole-lined trail as it gently rises through the snow gums along the southern side of the valley, keeping an eye out for the animal tracks which can often be seen imprinted in the snow. After about half a kilometre the route emerges on to the open tops into an area known as the Park. It is worth noting that here is the last protection from the elements before Edmonson's Hut. The remainder of the journey is made above the tree line.

At pole 739 the Australian Alps Walking Track merges from the south-west. One pole later the Marm Point and Kellys Tracks (the latter marked with a pole line) branch off to the east. Follow the numbered, AAWT pole line north as it sidles round the eastern side of a broad valley head to the base of Mt Nelse. A possible side trip can be made to Johnstone's Hut, marked by a subsidiary pole line branching off to the east at pole 782. Although most of the hut is locked for

the private use of the Telemark Ski Club of East Gippsland there is an open refuge section and it is worth the visit.

A second branch line is reached at pole 788. It marks the route to Edmonsons Hut about a kilometre to the west. Nestled among the snow gums, Edmonsons Hut is an excellent lunch site. The hut is in good condition and, for those who feel the need, rustic local amenities can be found nearby although the toilet paper is strictly BYO! Around the hut are excellent, sheltered snow-camping sites for those who intend to spend a night out, with water available from a creek 200 metres west of the hut although depending on the depth of the snow this may need to be dug out or melted.

To make the Mt Nelse ascent, return to the pole line on the Mt Nelse Track and follow it northwards up and round the side of the mountain. Note that the slopes of Mt Nelse are often icy due to the exposed nature of the peak and for easier skiing it is best to avoid the temptation of heading straight up the mountain. Ski leashes are also a good idea here as ice works wonderfully well in assisting the progress of any renegade skis, and I know from experience that it is very hard to catch a loose ski once it's on the move! (And it is even harder to find your ski if it does get away; not to mention the effort of the return trip.)

Having climbed the bulk of the mountain, turn off the track at around pole 818 and head back in a south-easterly direction, where the summit and its trig point should easily be reached across the broadly rounded mountain top. At 1882 metres the exposed summit has excellent views of the High Plains and—if you are lucky—of the impressive western faces of the Main Range on the horizon. For those with a bent toward cross-country downhill skiing some of the eastern gullies surrounding Mt Nelse and Mt Nelse North provide first-rate skiing after fresh snow although you should re-

member to keep an eye out for the cornices, which can present a nasty surprise!

To descend the mountain the best route is to retrace tracks and follow the pole line as any ice can make a more direct descent quite challenging. Continue along the pole line to Watchbed Creek, Rocky Valley Storage and finally to Windy Corner.

3 Fitzgeralds and Kellys Huts

Although the original Fitzgeralds Hut built in 1903 was burnt down by a school group

thus, although it is only a short distance, care needs to be taken in finding it.

Travelling east, ski down the right side of the yard along the fence-line as it passes some grand old snow gums, one of which is particularly impressive. Ignoring the signpost to Kellys Track (if visible above the snow), pass through the stock-yard gate on the left and continue downward in the original line of the fence for a short distance to Kellys Hut. In poor



Kellys Hut. Glenn van der Knijff

in 1991, an excellent new hut has been built in its place by supporters of the Wollangarra Youth Group and the trip out to it and to nearby Kellys Hut is a very pleasant day's outing.

Travel to the Kellys Track turn-off (pole 740) at the top of Watchbed Creek as previously described and follow the signposted pole line to the east as it passes between Hollands Knob and Marm Point; ignore the signposted fire track to Langford Gap, Wallaces Hut and Cope Hut. Continue alongside the pole line round Hollands Knob to the left and up on to the broad ridgeline.

As you ski along the ridgeline (or are effortlessly blown along it, as the case may be!) Mt Wills and the Main Range, just behind to its right, come into view in the north-east. In the south-west, the tree-covered summit of Mt Cope is visible as are the summits of Mts Loch and Hotham, just emerging from behind Marm Point.

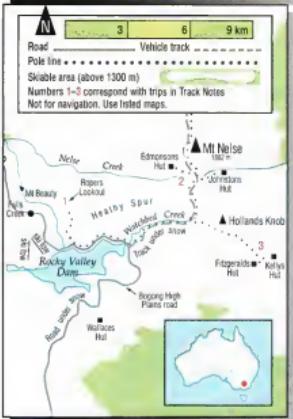
After passing through several thin snow-gum bands the pole line makes a short downward run into thicker trees. It then emerges into a clearing with alpine cattle yards on the left although in heavier seasons these may be buried. Here is a signposted track T-junction. To the left is the route down to Kellys Hut; to the right, the short pole line to Fitzgeralds Hut. Note that the route to Kellys Hut is unmarked and

snow conditions the new wire fence to the right can be followed instead but at about one metre high this can easily be covered. Placed in a beautiful snow-gum forest, Kellys Hut is a great spot for a break although due to its somewhat Spartan interior lunch is perhaps better eaten at Fitzgeralds Hut. A creek passes the hut about 50 metres to the northwest for those who need water although, again, this may need to be dug out. Return to the track junction and take the short pole line down to the wonderfully rebuilt Fitzgeralds Hut. Return to Falls Creek by way of Kellys Track, Watchbed Creek and the Bogong High Plains road.

For a change of scenery on the return journey an alternative is to take the picturesque Heathy Spur route back to the dam wall of Rocky Valley Storage. After you reach the Australian Alps Walking Track junction at pole 740 proceed north-east along the trail to the junction with the Heathy Spur walking track. This is also an option when returning from Edmonsons Hut and Mt Nelse. As the Heathy Spur route is unmarked, however, skiers should have good navigational skills before undertaking it.

Martin Meyer has a great recreational as well as historical interest in the Bogong High Plains through a family association with the region spanning more than 50 years. At present he lives in Melbourne and is an active member of the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club, through which he continues to pursue his keen interest in skiing and bushwalking.

Bogong High Plains





Before

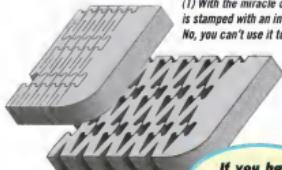


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The Kangarutha Walking Track

Walking the far south coast
of New South Wales, by *Marc Ainsworth*



uch of the far south coast of New South Wales between Tathra and the Victorian border is protected in National Parks and nature reserves. Consequently, there are some excellent bush-walking opportunities along defined tracks and through areas of relative wilderness. The rugged, rocky coastline with its reddish-brown cliffs is broken occasionally by protected, sandy bays and long stretches of pristine beach, much of it accessible by car, and by well-maintained walking tracks. One such walk is the Kangarutha Walking Track, which traverses high cliffs and drops down into sandy bays along its nine kilometre length. It starts near Tathra in Bournda National Park (440 kilometres south of

Sydney) and heads south to Wallagoot Lake although this delightful route can be walked in either direction. Overnight camping is possible but not essential if car shuttles are used.

● When to go

Avoid the peak times of Easter, Christmas and the school holidays when bushwalking in south coast National Parks, especially if camping overnight in designated areas in the parks. The camping area at Hobart Beach is usually fully booked months in advance during holiday periods.

● Safety/warnings

Water should be carried as opportunities to collect your own along the way are limited.

Red-bellied black snakes are common during summer but are not aggressive unless provoked and will do their utmost to get out of your way.

Ticks are more likely and, although small, can cause serious illness and distress if not diagnosed and treated early. They feed on the blood of other animals including humans and can spread disease in the process. The most obvious symptom of a tick is an itch although irritability and fatigue are delayed behavioural signs. If caught early, before they expand with the blood of their host, they feel like a small pimple. To remove a tick, grasp the head with a fine pair of tweezers and gently pull, trying not to break the head from the body. A dab of tea-tree oil on the wound will help to avoid infection and reduce the itch. Minor swelling of the bite and a prolonged itch are normal.

● Maps

The Wolumla and Bega 1:25 000 Central Mapping Authority sheets are the most detailed maps covering the Kangarutha Walking Track. The track is clearly marked on the second edition of the Wolumla map (1989), but not on the first edition of the Bega map (1982).

Alternatively, the Bournda National Park National Parks & Wildlife Service brochure contains an excellent map outlining major and minor roads, picnic areas, camping

areas and lookouts. It's free and can be obtained in person or by contacting the office. A good, general overview of the area is outlined in *The New South Wales South East Forests Touring Guide* which, in addition to CMA topographic maps, is available at the NPWS office.

● Access

Planning for a car shuttle is the best way to enjoy the Kangarutha Track, leaving one car at Kianinny Bay and another at Turingal Head. Turingal Head is reached by way of Sapphire Coast Drive (also known as the Kalaru-Merimbula road) and the Wallagoot Lake road on Wallagoot Lake's northern shore. The last two kilometres of the Wallagoot Lake road are in the Bournda National Park (the name Bournda is derived from the Aboriginal words Boondar-Boonah, meaning kangaroo and tea-tree). It's a four-wheel-drive track and it is sometimes closed by the NPWS due to the flood-waters from Wallagoot Lake. You can call the NPWS Merimbula office for information on (02) 6495 4130. If the Turingal Head track is closed or if you're not keen on taking a two-wheel-drive vehicle along the track, leaving a car at the Wallagoot Boat Club is a good option. Vehicle access to the boat club is excellent.

● Camping

Camping is not permitted at Kianinny Bay. However, camping facilities at Hobart Beach on the south side of Wallagoot Lake are excellent. A well-established and maintained camping ground has fireplaces, toilets and even a hot shower. The overnight fee to camp at Hobart Beach can be paid at the NPWS Merimbula office or direct to a ranger when he or she comes by.

During the peak periods of Easter, the September school holidays and between 1 December and 29 February, it costs \$22.50 for an overnight site for one or two people and \$37.50 for two nights. Visitors holding an annual entry permit can deduct \$7.50 from the above figures. Outside peak periods an overnight site for one or two people costs \$17.50 for one night and \$27.50 for two nights. There are no day-use fees.

● The walk

This day walk is best done north to south starting at Kianinny Bay in Tathra, which has a popular boat-launching ramp for fishing vessels heading offshore. Ample car parking is available, with toilets and barbecue facilities, in the adjacent council reserve. An interpretation shelter provides information on the walk and its features.

The Kangarutha Walking Track follows the coast south for about nine kilometres to Turingal Head at the mouth of the Wallagoot Lake, and takes between three and five hours. There are many scenic picnic spots along the way so it is a good idea to take a packed lunch.

Much of the Kangarutha Track has been created by local, recreational rock-fishermen and skin-divers who, in years gone by, would supplement their diet

The Kangarutha experience. Photos Marc Ainsworth

the walk at a glance

GRADE Easy

LENGTH Three to five hours; camping and additional walking possible

TYPE Coastal scenery, lakes, wetlands

REGION Far south coast of NSW

BEST TIME Outside peak times

SPECIAL POINTS

Unusual remnant coastal rainforest, Aboriginal middens, car shuttle is advisable

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with fresh fish, abalone and crayfish. Many of the old vehicle tracks they used are now closed but the coastal walking routes have been linked and extended to create the current track. It was formally completed by NPWS staff in 1983 and has recently been improved in a joint project between the NPWS and the Bege Aboriginal Lands Council. The improvements included the replacement of steps, and erosion-control works.

Before beginning the walk I would recommend a quick stop at Chamberlain Lookout. It's within a few hundred metres of the Kianinny Bay car park and has excellent views of the coastline along which the Kangarutha Track meanders.

A few kilometres north of here the coastal paddle-steamer *Mimosa* struck uncharted rocks and sank in 1863. Two passengers died and their bodies were later retrieved when divers were contracted to recover ship components and cargo from the sandy bottom. It is curious that the cash box was found to be empty when opened at the surface!

The walking track begins at a footbridge over a small creek flowing into Kianinny Bay. A large sign outlines distances to various points of interest. A short, steep climb leads to a rocky lookout and a navigational beacon. Keep an eye open here for white-bellied sea eagles soaring above. These large, white-and-ash-grey birds are carnivorous and nest in the coastal forests. Their wing-span can exceed two metres and they commonly soar in slow, majestic circles before dropping spectacularly to catch surface-feeding fish. From this rocky lookout the track heads into coastal heath characterised by hakea and dwarf shrub. A noticeable and abrupt change

Kangarutha Track



in the vegetation occurs as the track heads inland into forest with the dominant tree species being woollybutt and blue-leaved stringybark.

Boulder Bay is the first point of interest after leaving Kianinny Bay. It has a small, well-protected beach suitable for swimming and snorkelling. The track continues from the southern end of this rocky beach and can be a little difficult to find. Unusual remnant coastal rainforest fringes the western edge of the beach and contains rusty fig, cabbage fan palm and lilly-pilly—which is characterised by its round, pink berries and glossy, green leaves.

The next port of call is White Rock. It is the obvious remains of a clay-mining operation. The clay was extracted from here and transported to Kalaru, where it was made into bricks. Further south along the track are Games Bay, Turingal Rock and Turingal Head. Between Games Bay and the headland extensive clearing was undertaken by graziers seeking to expand their pastures. These regions have partly regenerated since their inclusion in the National Park and are dominated by scattered scrub and areas of pasture grasses including kikuyu. Keep an eye open for lace monitors along the track. Growing up to two metres in length these carnivorous reptiles escape any threats by rapidly climbing the nearest tree.

The official walking track doesn't go all the way to Turingal Head. It cuts inland at Turingal Cove (otherwise known as Bloomfields Cove) where it meets the vehicle-access track from the boat club. Walking south along the vehicle track leads to the mouth of Wallagoot Lake, a popular fishing and prawning spot during the summer months.

Follow this vehicle track north-west and it returns to the Wallagoot Boat Club, passing significant wetlands that are habitat for local and migratory birds. Some parts of the wetlands are fenced to protect species such as the little tern which nest on sand spits in the lake from September to February.

Humpback and southern right whales feed on krill off the coast during October and November and can sometimes be seen from the mainland. Groups of bottle-nose dolphins are common and can be seen close to the shore chasing fish or surfing on waves. Australasian gannet are a common sight along this stretch of coast and are most easily recognised as they dive for pilchards and mackerel from great heights, sending up white splashes as they hit the water.

• Additional walking

There are additional walking options for those who want to extend the Kangaratha

experience. Instead of finishing at Turingal Head or the boat club, walk south from Turingal Head, crossing the mouth of Wallagoot Lake. Walk down the long beach to Bournda Island where a track climbs the northern side of the headland from the beach and provides good views to the north and south. Aboriginal middens are scattered along the clifftop. They can easily be identified by collections of calcified, white shell. Getting on to Bournda Island is possible at low tide.

The track eventually leads to the North Tura car park or it can be used as a loop route on the way back to the Bournda Lagoon car park.

The torn bark of native trees alongside the track is evidence of yellow-tailed black cockatoo feeding on grubs. This tree damage often looks as though someone has attempted to cut the tree down with an axe and at times such damage breaks the trunk in two, eventually killing the tree. A deep, slow wing-beat and harsh, alarming



Just north of the island is the mouth of Bournda Lagoon, a small but scenic coastal lagoon well-suited to kayaking, canoeing and fishing with the family. A good walking track follows the northern shore of the lagoon from its car park. A short, uphill walk will lead you to a rocky lookout with fantastic views to the south and of Bournda Island. From here the track descends and winds its way through small patches of coastal rainforest. Occasionally the track returns to the lagoon banks on the way to its upper reaches. Here a small creek enters the lagoon (the creek is only accessible by kayak or canoe as it is further upstream than the footbridge). This walk is best done in the afternoon when the soft light and gentle breezes turn the lagoon glassy, with colourful reflections of bank-side vegetation illuminated.

Wade in ankle-deep water across the lagoon where the creek enters it. (An old footbridge formerly provided a dry crossing of the lagoon in the upper reaches. During heavy rain it was washed away, leaving walkers to wade the waist-deep water to the track on the other side.) Small fish such as bream and mullet are visible in the clear waters.

Boulder Bay.

scratches are identifying characteristics of the black cockatoo. These dense forests are also inhabited by nocturnal ringtail possums which build large, bird-like nests among the high branches of the thick scrub.

If you're camping at Hobart Beach for a few days and are a keen wildlife photographer a walk to Bondi Lake will not disappoint you. It can be undertaken as a loop incorporating a return beach walk, or on the way to Bournda Lagoon. This track is clearly defined and the adjacent patches of grass are very attractive to swamp wallabies and eastern grey kangaroos. The constant ringing call of the bell minor and the eastern whipbird is also common. 

Marc Ainsworth worked for the NPWS in NSW after completing his Bachelor of Applied Science degree. He now works as a ropes instructor and outdoors educator in Melbourne. He has walked throughout south-eastern Australia and travelled in Indonesia, Nepal, Japan, Canada and the USA.

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Touring and XCD skis

Michael Hampton goes down in style

With an increase of 'fat' XCD/Telemark skis on the market, the focus continues to be on downhill (turning) performance. Those touring skis still available remain relatively unchanged except in construction and for a general softening of the 'second camber' or 'wax pocket'—making skis easier to turn but sometimes at the expense of glide. In fact, a few of the models available were around when I bought my first pair of touring skis almost 20 years ago. It seems that the most popular touring skis today have an even flex, with a grip pattern underfoot; that is—downhill skis that can climb.

Due to changes in the ownership and distribution of Karhu skis at the time this survey was conducted, those models mentioned in the survey table may be available under the alternative brand names of Trak and Merrell.

Width, waist and flex—the turning versus straight-ahead equation. The first cross-country touring skis I bought were just that. They were skinny, stiff, had alloy edges, and had a pattern base for grip—great for getting about but poor turners. I, and army-pants-clad buddies, learned to turn the hard way. We literally had to stomp on these skis to start a turn. Once committed to a wobbly Telemark, balance was held by adopting the classic 'salmon-spearing' position—hands high and apart, poles forward.

My next skis had steel edges, some side-cut or waisting (skinnier in the middle) and although they had a short grip pattern and a stiff section (wax pocket or second camber) underfoot, the overall flex was reasonably even. These were probably the best all-round XCD skis I ever owned.

Like most Telemarkers, however, I wanted downhill performance and continued to specialise. I bought smooth-soled, softer, evenly flexing versions of the above skis; great for going down but now I needed skis to travel 'cross-country'. I still have a pair. One friend calls them the 'reindeer antlers'.

Nowadays, my Tele boards are fat and generously waisted, with a 'snappy' but even flex. They provide a very stable platform for skiing downhill and turning in all snow conditions—and so they should, they are no different from lightweight downhill



Campbell Spooner among the powder, Eagle Ridge, Mt Hotham, Victoria. Glenn Tempest

This survey summarises the findings of the writer, who was selected for the task because of his knowledge of the subject and his impartiality, among other things. The survey was checked and verified by Brendon Eishold and reviewed by at least three of *Wild's* editorial staff. It is based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of this issue's production; however, ranges and specifications may have changed since then.

Some aspects of this survey such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgment on the part of the author, the referee and *Wild*, with space being a key consideration.

An important criterion for inclusion in a *Wild* survey is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors and skiing-equipment shops in the central business districts of major Australian capital- and other cities.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.

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Touring and XCD skis

	Width at tip/width at tail, millimetres	Weight of 200 cm pair, grams	Flex, overall firmness	Lengths available, centimetres	Construction	Edges	Grip pattern	Needs waxing for grip and/or skins	Suitability for			Comments	Avg price, \$
									Touring	XCD	BC		
Asnes Norway													
Rago	67/57/62	1899	Uneven (WP), M	180–210	Laminated wood sandwich	Steel	Yes	No	****	***	*	Popular BC/XCD ski in Scandinavia	455
Nansen	76/56/66	2060	Even, S	190–210	Laminated aircell/ wood sandwich	Steel	No	Yes	**	***	***	Lighter, easy-tuning ski	480
Norpanc [†]	81/60/71	2100	Even, S	190–210	Laminated wood sandwich	Steel	No	Yes	*	***	***	Performs better in softer snow	495
Vulture [†] [‡]	90/70/80	2270	Even, S	180, 190, 195, 200, 205	Laminated aircell/ wood sandwich	Steel	No	Yes	**	****	****	Versatile, easy-tuning Telemark ski	550
Atomic Austria													
Mountain TR	59/50/55	1800 (198 cm)	Uneven (WP), M	184, 191, 198, 205, 210	Foam core, capped	1/2 steel	Yes	No	****	**	nr	Sturdy touring ski	325
Telemark Country TR	67/54/61	2250 (196 cm)	Uneven (WP), M	182, 189, 196, 203, 210	As above	Steel	Yes	No	****	***	*	Stable Telemark touring ski	375
Telemark 80/60/70	80/60/70	2600 (198 cm)	Even, S	184, 191, 198, 205	As above	Steel	No	Skins	*	****	***	All-round, all-mountain XCD ski	450
Betacarv TM 26 [†] [‡]	97/62/88	3100	Even, S	170, 180, 190, 200	As above	Steel	No	Skins	*	***	****	Easy-tuning ski on piste and in powder	700
Black Diamond USA													
Desolation [†]	9/69/80	2900	Even, M	170–195	Wood core, capped	Steel	No	Skins	*	****	***	A wider all-rounder. Suitable for Telemarking and alpine touring	500
Polar Star [†]	72/54/63	2400	Even, M	191, 198, 205	As above	Steel	Yes	No	***	****	*	User-friendly all-rounder	500
Resolution [†]	99/66/92	3400	Even, M	160–190	Foam core, capped	Steel	No	Skins	*	***	****	A fast, wanted ski that will perform best on steep, deeps and bumps	500
Rubicon [†]	85/65/77	3100	Even, M	184, 191, 198, 205	As above	Steel	No	Skins	*	****	***	All-round, all-mountain XCD ski	530
Fischer Austria													
Mountain Cross BC Crown	58/52/55	1950	Slightly uneven (WP), M-S	180, 190–210	Wood core, capped (1/2 WP)	Steel	Yes	No	****	**	nr	Lighter touring ski	250
E99 Mountain Crown	65/55/60	2300	Slightly uneven (WP), M	180–210	As above	Steel	Yes	No	****	***	nr	An old-timer that performs well and has had a few face-lifts. This year's model is softer	400
Telepathic	93/63/93	3300	Even, M	170, 180, 190	Wood core, capped	Steel	No	Skins	*	***	****	A fast, wanted ski that will perform best on steep, deeps and bumps	445
Karhu Canada													
Kodiak Kinetic	60/52/57	2240	Slightly uneven (WP), S	180, 190–215	Foam/fibreglass sandwich, torsion box, epoxy side walls	1/2 seg- mented steel	Yes	No	****	**	nr	A soft, grippy ski suitable for entry-level skiers	370
XCD GT Kinetic	62/54/59	2440	As above	180, 190–215	As above	Steel	Yes	No	****	***	*	Classic touring/XCD ski. Robust	370
Catamount Kinetic	85/70/80	2240 (160 cm)	Slightly uneven (WP), M-S	160, 175, 190	As above	Steel	Yes	No	***	***	*	Compact ski with good flotation. Handy in tight situations	380
10th Mountain Tour	68/55/60	3040 (198 cm)	Even, M-S	188, 193, 198, 203, 207	As above	Seg- mented steel	Yes	No	***	****	*	All-round performer in various conditions with good grip	470
K2 Norway													
Piste Off	85/65/75	3340	Even, S	185–205	Triaxial-braided torsion box	Steel	No	Yes	**	****	***	All-round Telemark ski for all conditions	575
Piste Stinx	99/70/88	3500 (190 cm)	Even, M-S	170, 180, 190, 200	As above	Steel	No	Yes	*	***	****	Wider ski excels in all kinds of off-piste	700
Totally Piste	99/65/88	3360 (190 cm)	Even, M-S	180–210	As above	Steel	No	Yes	*	***	****	High-end cruiser that performs well on and off piste	800
Morotto Italy													
Jokulkyrkja	66/54/60	2600 (197 cm)	Even, S	185–205	Wood core, fibreglass- reinforced sandwich, ABS side walls	Steel	Yes	No	***	**	*	Light, forgiving touring ski	450
Legend	80/63/72	3250	Even, M	185–205	As above	Steel	Yes	No	**	****	**	All-round XCD performance on and off piste	530
Tua Italy													
Cirque	80/60/70	2900	Even, M-S	182, 192, 200, 205	Torsion box, capped	Steel	No	Yes	*	****	***	Good performance in a wide range of snow conditions	700
Montet	86/74/76	3120 (197 cm)	Even, M	182, 187, 192, 197, 202	As above	Steel	No	Yes	*	***	****	Heavy-duty performance at resorts and in the back country	800
Razor [†] [‡]	92/64/82	3220 (197 cm)	Even, M	182, 187, 192, 197	As above	Steel	No	Yes	*	***	****	All-round tuning performance especially in deep snow	900
● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent	BC back country			XCD cross-country downhill	WP wax pocket or second camber	M	medium	S	soft	St	stiff	nr not recommended	
Piste packed snow	† not seen by author			‡ not seen by referee	The country listed after the manufacturer's name is the country in which the products are made								

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Points to watch

● Plan before you buy

Decide what type of skiing you prefer before you buy. Those new to the sport, like myself 20 years ago, should probably go for an all-round ski. If you've really 'got the bug' and expect to do lots of skiing don't be afraid to buy performance skis into which you will grow. It's better than being stuck with skis that you outgrow quickly.

● In the shop

A ski's flex will tell quite a lot about its potential performance. The usual procedure is to place the tail of the ski on the floor, hold the tip in one hand, and push out the middle of the ski. Feel the resistance or stiffness and look down the ski tip to tail to observe the evenness of flex. Touring skis have a 'wax pocket' or 'second camber', a

(alpine) skis. For crossing country, however, they're clunkers—mainly because they refuse to track in a straight line unless fitted with climbing skins.

Weight. The weight of a ski is determined by its construction. The weights shown in the table are for a 200 centimetre pair unless otherwise stated. To determine the weight for each centimetre divide 200 by the given weight. If you mainly ski at resorts and catch lifts weight may be somewhat irrelevant.

Length. Ideal ski length is determined by your weight and height. The rule of thumb when selecting the length of a touring ski is to put one hand in the air. With the ski on its tail, the tip should touch your wrist. There are variations to this rule. Select a shorter ski if you are tall and light. Try a longer ski if you are heavy for your height. For purely downhill performance on wider Telemark skis add five to ten centimetres to your height, or subtract five to ten centimetres from the hand-above-head rule. (Ski lengths come in five centimetre increments unless otherwise stated.)

Construction. Once, skis were made from wood. Next, a plastic sole was fitted to laminated strips of wood. This was then covered with a plastic or fibreglass top sheet to provide a basic wood-sandwich ski. Plastic (ABS) is used to cover exposed wood on the ski's side walls. Another method of construction is to substitute the wood core with injection-moulded foam, creating a foam sandwich. Lightweight substances such as carbon fibre and Kevlar can provide a tough, springy top sheet. Some XCD skis, like many alpine skis, utilise alloy in the same role to ensure robust skis. Torsion box is a durable construction where fibreglass is wrapped around the core material. A capped 'monocoque' torsion-box construction is now widely used. By eliminating the ski side walls this capped construction may enhance the ski's overall strength and durability and its performance in some snow conditions. Performance skis have sintered polyethylene bases that are extremely durable yet sufficiently porous to accept glide wax.

stiffer section under the foot which will interrupt the ski's overall flex to varying degrees. This pocket will be present in most of the pattern-based skis although designers have progressively been softening this area. (The term wax pocket (WP) is given in the flex column.) Hold the ski and twist the tip to get some idea of its torsional stiffness.

● Match boots to skis

Match your skis with boots that are up to the job. If you're matching heavy XCD/Telemark skis to plastic cuff boots you might consider release bindings.

● Get suitable ski poles

Don't skimp on poles. Light but strong, adjustable types are ideal for touring and back-country XCD skiing.

Edges. Metal edges provide security in icy conditions and protect the ski's sole from hidden objects such as rocks. Steel is commonly used. Metal edges stiffen a ski and add to its weight. To overcome this some manufacturers produce skis with segmented metal edges. Another method is to fit a three-quarter metal edge which is, like the pattern, under the foot where most pressure is applied.

Grip pattern. When the ski is weighted and pushed down, the pattern grips but allows the ski to slide forward. It's a convenient means of getting about but some of the longer, more aggressive (and grippy) patterns will slow a gliding ski.

Waxing/skins. Smooth-soled skis can be waxed for grip but most skiers prefer to use climbing skins when skiing the back country. The security and grip of skins provide a sort of skier's 4WD when in mountainous terrain, and when carrying a heavy pack. Skins may be used on pattern-based skis if extra grip is required.

Best uses. Now, more than ever, first-time ski buyers have to decide their performance preference—touring or turning or somewhere in between. Back-country XCD (BC XCD) entails skiing out to your chosen venue, then climbing some big hills for downhill runs. Experienced, all-round skiers will have to be content with owning two (or more) pairs of skis. Check the bullets.

Cross-country skiing is a complex sport; no wonder the masses seem to prefer downhill skiing and snowboarding. Don't be disheartened, however. Statistics show that more cross-country and/or back-country skiers stay in the sport for life compared with other snow sports. Why? Probably because it is such a diverse and multifaceted sport. To get the most out of your new skis, learn how to use them. Take a few lessons and get as much TOS (time on skis) as you can. 

Michael Hampton (see Contributors in Wild no 17) lives in Marysville in Victoria's High Country and works during winter as a Nordic ski instructor. He is a former director of a ski school and has skied extensively in the Australian Alps and overseas.

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H

Headlamps

Hands-free flashing—a Wild survey

In my early days, cooking at night was done while holding a pencil torch in my mouth. This did not work very well and when I obtained a headlamp, I really appreciated how well headlamps work. The torches surveyed here were all designed for outdoors sports and while they are frequently not fashionable they are very practical. They were available in outdoors retail shops in March.

These lamps can be operated with either the standard krypton **globe** or a brighter halogen globe. Halogen globes are expensive (about \$13) but are popular with some users because they are generally twice as bright as standard globes. They normally last about three times as long as standard globes. However, as they reduce battery life by more than half, they cost more to run.

Batteries do not come with any of the lamps. Alkaline batteries which typically have about three times the life of standard batteries are the best value. The longest life comes from lithium batteries—they last considerably longer than the alkaline ones but are very expensive.

Rechargeable batteries are the other alternative. However, they may function poorly in extreme cold and their charge tends to drop off rapidly when near



depletion—sometimes without any warning at all. (Alkalines dim slowly as their charge depletes.) Unless you use your torch regularly, rechargeable batteries will fail due to old age well before you obtain a worthwhile number of charges.

Battery position refers to where the batteries are stored. Power packs at the back of the headlamp provide better balance when worn on a head or a helmet. Having the batteries at the front

It's not always a good thing to be able to see what you're eating! Glenn Tempest

This survey summarises

the findings of the writer, who was selected for the task because of his knowledge of the subject and his impartiality, among other things. The survey was checked and verified by Scott Edwards and reviewed by at least three of *Wild's* editorial staff. It is based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of this issue's production; ranges and specifications may have changed since then.

Some aspects of this survey, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgment on the part of the author, the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion in this *Wild* survey is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of major Australian capital- and other cities.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.

Points to watch

- Put the headlamp on and make sure that the straps are short enough to suit your head. If you wear a hat or helmet check that the headlamp fits over the headgear.
- If you intend to walk or run wearing your headlamp, check its stability when you turn and nod your head. All wobble around to a certain extent but some are better than others.
- Open the battery compartment and globe casing. Test whether you can change a globe and batteries by feel as if it were dark. Key features such as indentations for battery direction assist greatly with this.
- Examine the switch mechanism and assess whether it can be turned on accidentally. If it can, you will need to take out the batteries or reverse some of them when the headlamp is stowed in your pack.
- Buy several spare globes when you purchase your torch.

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Headlamps

	Covers with standard and/or halogen globes	Batteries, number x size	Battery position	Weight without batteries, grams	Weight with batteries, grams	Variable focus	Suitability for							
							Hand holding	Bushwalking	Caving	Mountaineering	Travel	Water sports	Value for money	Approx. \$
Lago France														
Ultralight LO4	Both	2 x AA	Front	85	129	No	••	•••	•	•	••	nr	••••	50
Enduro LOX	Both	1 x LR12	Back	132	285	No	•	••	••	•••	••	nr	••••	70
Petzl France														
Saxo	Standard	4 x AA	Front	114	193	Yes	••••	••••	•	•	••••	nr	••••	40
Micro	Standard	2 x AA	Front	100	145	Yes	•••	••	•	•	••••	•	••••	50
Zoom	Standard	1 x LR12	Back	168	321	Yes	•	•••	••••	•••	•	nr	••••	70
Mega	Both	3 x AA or 3 x C	Back	245	315	Yes	•	••	••••	••	•	•	••••	90
Duo	Both*	4 x AA	Back	205	295	Yes	•	•••	••••	•••	•	••••	••••	110
Princeton Tec USA														
Solo	Both	2 x AA	Front	120	164	Yes**	••••	••••	••	•	••••	•••	•••	70
Vor Tec	Both	4 x AA	Front	135	225	Yes**	•••	••••	••••	••	••	••••	••••	85

● poor ● average ● good ● excellent AA 1.5 volt battery C 1.5 volt battery LR12 flat 4.5 volt battery nr not recommended * has alternating switch to select standard (krypton) or halogen ** has two settings only The country listed after the manufacturer's name is the country in which the products are made

eliminates the wire connection which can be another point of failure and makes the torch easier to hold in the hand.

Headtorch **weight with batteries** applies for alkaline batteries. For the Mega, which can use different sizes of batteries, the lighter AA batteries were used.

For **focus**, Petzl uses a rotating front bezel giving adjustable focus. Princeton Tec provides two reflectors; a wide beam and a narrow beam. All torches were tested for visible distance but, as they all use good reflectors, performances were almost identical for the same battery voltage.

For the torches that use two 1.5 volt batteries, standard globes give 7.5 metres of useful light; halogen globes, about 25 metres. For the torches that use either a flat 4.5 volt battery or three 1.5 volt batteries, standard gives about 25 metres; halogen, about 75 metres. For the torches that use four 1.5 volt batteries, standard gives about 30 metres; and halogen, about 85 metres.

Hand holding relates to how suitable the torch is for holding.

In reference to **suitability** for use, note that the Petzl Duo, Princeton Tec Solo and Vor Tec are the only torches that can be immersed in water for short periods. Great for underwater bushwalking!

The **value** column considers a range of factors which include the suitability for use and the value for money ratings. Overall these lamps are good and work well.

John Chapman

RUCKSACKS

New explorer

Columbus hybrid packs offer rucksack-style entry into the main compartment and suitcase-style entry under a weatherproof flap. The packs come in 65 and 75 litre sizes, with a zip-off day pack. Available from *Mountain Designs* shops. RRP \$429.

CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR



iZWool International's pure wool tops.

Home-grown woolen shirts

Have you ever wanted to replace your poorly insulating synthetic shirt with a natural-fibre one with thermal properties? Try these pure wool shirts, one short-sleeved, the other long-sleeved. Woolen long johns are also available. Australian manufacturer iZWool International claims that the garments are moisture wicking, quick drying, non-pilling, odour-resistant and durable. Apparently the fabric becomes softer the more it is washed. Available from *Snowgum*, *Mainpeak* and *Ray's Tent City*. RRP \$39.95 and \$49.95 for the short- and long-sleeved shirts, respectively, and \$39.95 for the long johns.

Shake a leg

Thomas Cook Boot & Clothing Company has brought out *Kombi Pants* in a Venturelite fabric (polyester). These lightweight pants can be converted into shorts by zipping off the legs. However, when wearing the 'legs' you can feel the join as you step. The fabric is claimed to be water-resistant, windproof, breathable, quick drying and durable. The seat has a double layer of fabric and there

are many pockets. Phone (03) 9894 1277 for details of stockists. Estimated RRP \$95.

New lines of defence

Macpac presents an array of new garments including *parkas* and *pants*, as well as *warm tops*. The *Maelstrom* parka and the *Missile Pants* are both designed for back-country powder seekers. The *Maelstrom* is fully lined, is made with two-layer Taslan Gore-Tex and has a snow skirt. The three-layer *Reflex Missile Pants* feature a sealed waistband, snow cuffs and upper-leg zips. The *Ariel* is a new women's fit parka, ideal for overseas travel. RRP \$499, \$279 and \$479, respectively.

The *Vapour Jacket*, the *Vapour Vest* and the *Polar Cap* are all made with WindStopper fleece. Both the jacket and the vest are reversible for when it turns chilly. The cap has fold-down ear flaps. RRP \$249, \$169 and \$40, respectively. New models of warm tops include the *Virago* (made for women), *Cosmos* (a 'popover' top) and the *Future*. RRP \$169, \$169 and \$349, respectively. The *Sirocco Tee* and the long-sleeved *Sirocco Top* are made from moisture-wicking Coolmax. All items are available from most outdoors shops. RRP \$69 and \$89, respectively.

In-vest

For cold-weather connoisseurs, consider the *Tec-vest* and the *Breeze* fleece vests, the former made from Polartec, the latter from WindStopper. Available from *Mountain Designs*. RRP \$89 and \$139, respectively.

Ogle these goggles

The new US-made *Costa Del Mar Hydros* sun-glasses/snow goggles are an unusual yet functional combination of sun-glasses and goggles—well suited to ski-touring, mountaineering and other outdoors activities. The pair we tested on the Main Range was comfortable and sturdy. With 100 per cent protection from ultraviolet light and with

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polished lenses, they brought surrounding peaks into a clear, sharp focus. The elasticised strap ensures a snug fit and ample ventilation holes prevent fogging. A lifetime warranty is provided. Contact *Lowrance Eagle Australia* on (02) 9905 9700. RRP \$230.



Costa Del Mar Hydros eye wear. Near right, Nalgene Cantene. Far right, MSR Dragonfly stove.

Test-drive these boots

While comfortable for general around-town use, the new *Land Rover Dakota* boots appear more at home stepping out of their 4WD namesake than for serious bushwalking. Made of suede and Cordura, these high-cut boots have a stylish appearance but are unlikely to suit those who do anything more than walk wak from the 4WD to the ski lodge. Available from *Myer* and *Grace Brothers*. RRP \$140.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mouth-to-mouth

Gore-Tex jackets have a 'durable water repellent' fluoro-polymer coating to stop the face fabric from 'wetting out', but it wears off over time. A hot tumble-dry or iron can rejuvenate it for a while, but there comes a time when it needs to be replaced.

A couple of fluoro-polymer sprays are on the market for this, and now *WL Gore* has released *ReviveX*, 'specifically engineered' for *Gore-Tex*, *Activent* and *DryLiner*. It's water based and comes in a spray bottle. Apply after you have machine-washed your jacket, then tumble-dry or iron. Water just beads and rolls off, leaving your jacket dry and you more comfortable. A bottle treats two to four jackets. Available from specialist outdoors shops. RRP \$29.95.

Roger Caffin

Rest easy

Cascade Designs has released new *Therm-a-Rest self-inflating* mattresses said to be up to 30 per cent lighter and more compact than earlier models while offering an undiminished performance. This has been achieved with the use of a new type of foam core, *LiteFoam*, which is cut narrower than the width of the mat, stamped in a geometrical pattern, then stretched to the full width inside the mat cover. The *LiteFoam* mat is available in two lengths. Distributed by *Grant Minervini Agencies*. RRP \$120 and \$162, respectively.

Dragonfly stove

The gear freaks at *MSR* have done it again—they've made another compact and lightweight stove, the *Dragonfly*. With all the explosive flair (or should that be flare?) of an XGK and the precision flame control of a

Whisperlite, the Dragonfly may well be a dream come true for the discerning pyromaniac. The US-made Dragonfly sports three stable and large wired 'legs'—giving excellent pot stability—and appears to have excellent flame control. Fuel-bottle pump, wind- and heat shields and spare parts are included. Distributed by *Grant Minervini Agencies*. RRP about \$225.

Le headtorch

The *Enduro headlamp*, made by French manufacturer *Lago*, is now available. The *Enduro* uses a 4.5 volt battery and is said to give 15 hours of light with a standard globe. Distributed by *Macson Trading Company* and stocked by *Snogum*. See the *Wild* headlamp survey on page 89. RRP \$70.

Collapsible species

Wild recently received three *collapsible water-bottles/hydration systems* for inspection. The *Platypus 1* (one litre capacity, push-pull cap) and the *Hoser 2 Long* (two litre capacity, with a drinking tube fitted with a valve) are both made with three-ply plastic laminate (sealed at the seams) guaranteed to withstand freezing and boiling, and are lined to eliminate a plastic aftertaste. Other models are also available from US *Cascade Designs*. Distributed by *Grant Minervini Agencies*. RRP \$9.95 and \$33.80, respectively.

Readers who use a *Nalgene* wide-mouth water-bottle can now consider its flexible cousin, the *Cantene*. Available in capacities of 1.4 and 2.8 litres, we inspected the smaller one, which has a wide mouth. As well, the contents can be frozen. Guaranteed to be leak-proof. Distributed by *Outdoor Agencies*. RRP \$19.95 and \$21.95, respectively.

Dig this

A strong *toilet trowel* is now available for all your 'digging' activities'. *Grant Minervini Agencies* is distributing the US-made *U-Dig It* trowel, a fold-up contraption with a stainless steel blade which should prove

more suitable for digging in tough ground than the common plastic trowel. Of course, it is heavier. It comes in a pouch for attachment to a belt or rucksack. RRP about \$49.

Dry-bag camera case

This *camera case* for SLR cameras comes with an outer dry-bag made of 'waterproof Hydroseal fabric'. The bag has a roll-top closure and is said to protect the contents from rain, spray, splashes, standing water and quick dunks. The pad inside the water-resistant case is meant to add buoyancy. However, the product is not designed for complete submersion for long periods or at



significant depths. The manufacturer claims that it is 'the ideal camera bag for... just about anyone...carrying an SLR camera on the water or in foul weather'. Made in the USA by *SunDog*, the *River Runner Telesoom Case* is distributed by *Grant Minervini Agencies* and sells for about \$110.

GPS roll-over effect

A 'roll-over' problem, similar to the year 2000 bug, may affect Global Positioning

System receivers made before 1995—and some made since then—unless they are corrected by software.

When a GPS unit receives a system timing update from a GPS satellite, the unit is able to calculate the 'time of week' within the current GPS 'week number'. It is expected that at midnight (Coordinated Universal Time; formerly Greenwich mean time) on 22 August 1999 a GPS unit—without a software correction—will calculate the current date as midnight on 5 January 1980. (This is due to the GPS week number rolling over to week 0000 after counting through 1024 weeks.)

Most GPS units made since 1995 have been designed to allow for the roll-over. Older units may be susceptible, and the effects of the roll-over could vary within



each type of receiver. Users should contact the manufacturer of their receiver to find out whether it will be affected.

Any identified roll-over effects will most likely be corrected through software upgrades to existing receivers.

Lightweight wind-gauge

Swedish company *Silva* has released a new digital LCD *wind-gauge*. The hand-held instrument measures wind speed (current, average and peak), temperature and wind chill. The gauge is waterproof to five metres (when immersed in water), floats, and is covered by an Australian two-year warranty. Distributed by *Macson Trading Company*, it is available from selected outdoors shops. RRP about \$220. 

TRIX

Put your feet down in the snow

Snow-camping comfort, by Stephen Bunton

Getting out of a snow-dappled tent and into your 'fighting' gear or—worse—getting back afterwards replete with a mantle of newly fallen snow or—worse still—with snow in every crevice of your inner clothing from a few serious prangs can certainly pose a few problems for any snow-camper. At times like these you wish you had a spacious hut to which to return. There is an answer.

One way to add extra volume to your snow-tent is to dig a decent-sized pit wholly within the vestibule of your tent, extending it to the entrance of your inner. This allows you

to sit up and put your feet down, which adds enormously to your in-tent comfort. It also gives you the extra headroom to 'change' with a little added comfort. As well, you can fashion a small ledge for your stove or place the stove into the pit so that you can see what you're stirring while remaining recumbent.

Now this may not sound as good as the seating and table in a cosy hut but once again you can enjoy the luxury of sitting up to drink your coffee...without the risk of spilling it into your sleeping-bag. If only I could think of a way to simulate the warm air from a hand dryer in a rest room...

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

This department describes new products which the editorial staff consider will be of interest to readers. The tests they apply for inclusion are whether a product is useful for the rucksack sports, and whether it is fundamentally new (or newly available in Australia). The reports are based on information provided by the manufacturer/distributor. As is the case with all editorial text appearing in *Wild*, publication of material in this department is in no way connected with advertising. Submissions for possible publication are accepted from advertisers and from businesses not advertising in *Wild*, as well as from our readers. (See also the footnote at the end of this department.)

Products (on loan to *Wild*) and/or information about them, including colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

Three Down, 272 More To Go



Modular Mitts

The Modular Mitt is constructed with fully seam-taped Taslan Gore-Tex for total waterproofness and vapour permeability. The palms are made of sticky ToughTek backed by a layer of ultra-waterproof Hydroseal fabric. An extra long gauntlet keeps snow and wind out. Idiot cords anchor them to your wrist - no more losing a mitt in the wind. And the dual Velcro cinch straps provide instant adjustment across the back of the hand and at the end of the gauntlet.



Crocodiles

The Croc's unique design allows a snug fit around both the calf and ankle while a front closure creates easy access to laces and boots. The foot section is armoured with a double lining of 1000 denier Cordura and packcloth while the upper leg is made of Taslan Gore-Tex for vapour permeability and waterproofness. The die-cut, nylon-reinforced rubber instep strap is extremely tough and creates an excellent seal around the boot at the base of the gaiter.



B-17 Bomber Hat

Ideal for winter sports, this hat will keep you warm and comfortable in any weather. The B-17 Bomber Hat features OR's patented Cinch-Band size adjustment system, a plastic-stiffened brim and a factory seam-sealed Taslan Gore-Tex dome. The interior and ear flaps are lined with warm and comfortable Moonlite pile. The ear flaps connect under the chin with Velcro creating a snug, easily adjustable fit. They may also be fastened up over the top of the head when not needed.



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A coupler kit is available to convert two camper models into a double mattress.

All Earth Mat™ self inflating mats come supplied in a nylon stuff sack for easy transportation, and a repair kit and spare valve are included.



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lightweight long	183 x 51 x 2.5 cm	990 g
standard long	185 x 55 x 3.5 cm	1295 g
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camper super deluxe	193 x 64 x 6.5 cm	1850 g
double deluxe - zipped together	193 x 130 x 4.5 cm	3300 g

new



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Beds, boots and backpacks

A major history of the YHA in Australia

BOOKS

Beds, Boots and Backpacks: the story of the YHA in Australia

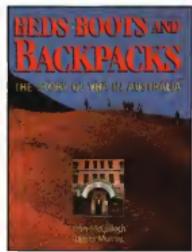
by John McCulloch and James Murray (Playright Publishing, 1997, RRP \$24.95).

Between the soft covers of this 276-page book lies an insight into the humble beginnings of the Australian Youth Hostels Association. With references to archival material and interviews with stalwarts in the AYHA, the authors have presented a comprehensive and easy-to-read account of events from the inaugural public meeting in 1939.

Naturally, there is a specific focus on the hostels, which include the world's largest. Black-and-white photographs are used extensively to capture the broad scope of AYHA activities. There are accounts of the various special activity groups, but in keeping with the AYHA's philosophy they are not presented as individual chapters but rather reported where appropriate.

Like any history specific to an organisation, this book will appeal primarily to members of the AYHA. However, it may also attract those with an interest in the achievements of voluntarism or the budget-traveller segment of the tourism industry.

Monica Chapman



effort but, alas, he is certainly not a story-teller.

The diary is an unforgetting form. Crafting a compelling tale from daily entries requires discipline and a scrupulous eye for detail. Bolland faithfully records places passed and kilometres covered. At times there are promising reflections on his surroundings and the rigours of his quest. However, these moments are never spun into any underlying narrative thread that is strong enough to haul the general reader through the extensive, mundane recounting of meals consumed, media appointments and meetings with a succession of inconsequential strangers.

This, then, is a story that will appeal mainly to the author's friends and those with a particular interest in marathon, Australian, wilderness journeys. While he is understandably proud of his achievements, it is to be Bolland's next adventure in publishing that includes an equally tenacious editor.

Quentin Chester

homeward 'leg' from Cape York Peninsula round the coastline included a number of side-trips—a paddle from Cooktown to the Cape, a trek from Wilsons Promontory to Mt Kosciuszko, a lap of Tassie and a kayak dash down the Murray River.

To walk 1600 kilometres from Wiluna to the Tanamai Track or paddle 2500 kilometres from Tom Groggin to the sea takes determination. If the cover portrait of the author hauling his kayak through ankle-deep mud is anything to go by, steely determination is something Bolland has in bucket loads. His journey was a mighty

● Sydney and Beyond—Eighty-six walks in New South Wales

by Andrew Mevissen (Macstyle, 1998, RRP \$19.95).

Don't let the photo of the Sydney Opera House on the cover put you off. This book includes 86 great walks in NSW, and Sydney is just the starting-point for these explorations. Most are pleasant day walks.

Sketch maps by Stuart Roth and the author accompany each walk description. Black-and-white photos add to the book's charm.

Mevissen has cleverly selected a wide cross-section of the State's walks and it is a credit to him that he has squeezed so much into one guidebook. Readers are told where, when, what and who for each walk as well as given track notes and historical and scenic information.

Note: The Mt Kosciuszko map incorrectly shows Coopatamba Hut beside the meshed walkway between the Thredbo chair-lift and Mt Kosciuszko.

Greg Powell

● Australian Alps: Kosciuszko, Alpine and Namadgi National Parks

by Deirdre Slattery (UNSW Press, 1998, RRP \$29.95).

This excellent resource guide is the third book in the National Park Field

Guide series. The three parks it includes are the backbone of the alpine regions of Victoria, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. Discussed are history, geology, vegetation, wildlife and current management issues. While many chapters are scientific in nature, they are explained in an easy-to-read way which should give this book broad appeal. Sensitive issues such as conflicts between recreational uses,

The Long Way Home

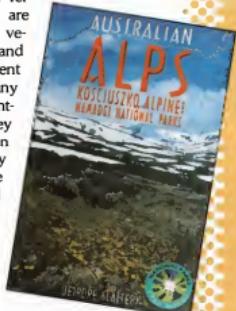
by Terry Bolland (published by the author, 1998, RRP \$29.95).

When Terry Bolland left Perth in May 1990 he gave himself 12 months to travel round Australia. Nothing unusual about that: a lot of people take a year off to see the country. What made Bolland's dream different was his plan to turn the trip into a kind of personal triathlon.

This book is his diary of a clockwise journey north from Perth by kayak, then overland on foot and bike through Central Australia to Queensland. The daunting

hoped that publishing includes an equally tenacious editor.

Quentin Chester



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science, management and conservation are presented in a balanced manner which describes the issues involved rather than taking sides.

Recreation details are brief—there are listings of the major short walks in each park and some notes to a very small group of walks. The appendix with addresses and resource information will be very helpful if planning a visit. With 233 full colour pages packed with useful facts, this guide should be essential reading for anyone who wants to understand more about the Australian Alps.

John Chapman

● Saving Our Natural Heritage?

by Craig Copeland and Damien Lewis (Halstead Press Publishers, 1997, RRP \$19.95).

I would never have seen it if I hadn't believed it's one of the better quotes from a serious book exploring the interactions between scientists and managers as both try to 'save' the environment. The question mark in the title is telling. For some of the 26 contributors there has already been enough science; all they need is the committed application of results. For others there is still a desperate need to find out more, but also to communicate the results of research in a way lay people can understand. Stimulating and remarkably cheap for a text aimed as much at professionals as at the general public.

Stephen Garnett

● Wilsons Promontory: Marine and National Park, Victoria

by Geoff Westcott (UNSW Press, 1995, RRP \$25).

The recent defence of the Prom against commercial exploitation showed that it is sacred to an astonishingly broad section of Victorians. But I wonder how many have done more than stroll on the beach at Tidal River. This splendidly meaty pocket guide, combining science and history with detailed track notes, gives visitors a chance to understand the landscape and the processes, both human and non-human, that have formed it. Some details will become dated. However, it is to be hoped that most of the book will be relevant for many years. We look forward to many more books in this series of National Park Field Guides edited by Tony Lee.

SG

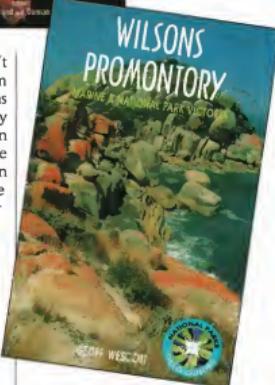
VIDEO

● The Science Behind the Strategy video

(Tasmanian National Parks & Wildlife Service, 1997, RRP \$29.95).

ABC 'Science Show' guru Robyn Williams states that 'walkers are causing sustained vegetation damage and soil loss at many remote locations throughout the World Heritage Area, with little or no recovery'. Many of us who have spent time in

Tasmania know that, sad to say, this is all too true. The deterioration of walking tracks, over-crowded camp sites and sanitation horrors have forced the Tasmanian NPWS to set in motion a radical, new management blueprint to try to solve the problem. This video focuses on the brass-tacks science that is used to measure just how much damage is being done. Unfortunately, it's not good news. Walker numbers will no doubt



be restricted in the near future and *The Science Behind the Strategy* is a wise marketing step towards convincing walkers of that.

Glenn Tempest

COMPUTER

● Trekking to Everest—an interactive journey through the Nepal Himalaya

(Excessbyte Consultancy, 1997, RRP £24.95 from 33a South St, Bridport, Dorset DT6 3NY, UK.)

Now you can experience the wonders of Nepal's famous Mt Everest trek without leaving the comfort of your own home. Over 500 photographs and 120 sound clips detail every step of the journey from Kathmandu to Kala Patar. The interactive photographs are superb and attention to detail is impressive. It is a great first step to planning your trip, or use it just to impress friends with places to which you have already been.

GT

Publications for possible review are welcome. Send them to the Editor, *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.

For information on listing your business in this regular feature, please contact Wild Publications Pty Ltd, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181. Phone (03) 9826 8482, fax (03) 9826 3787.

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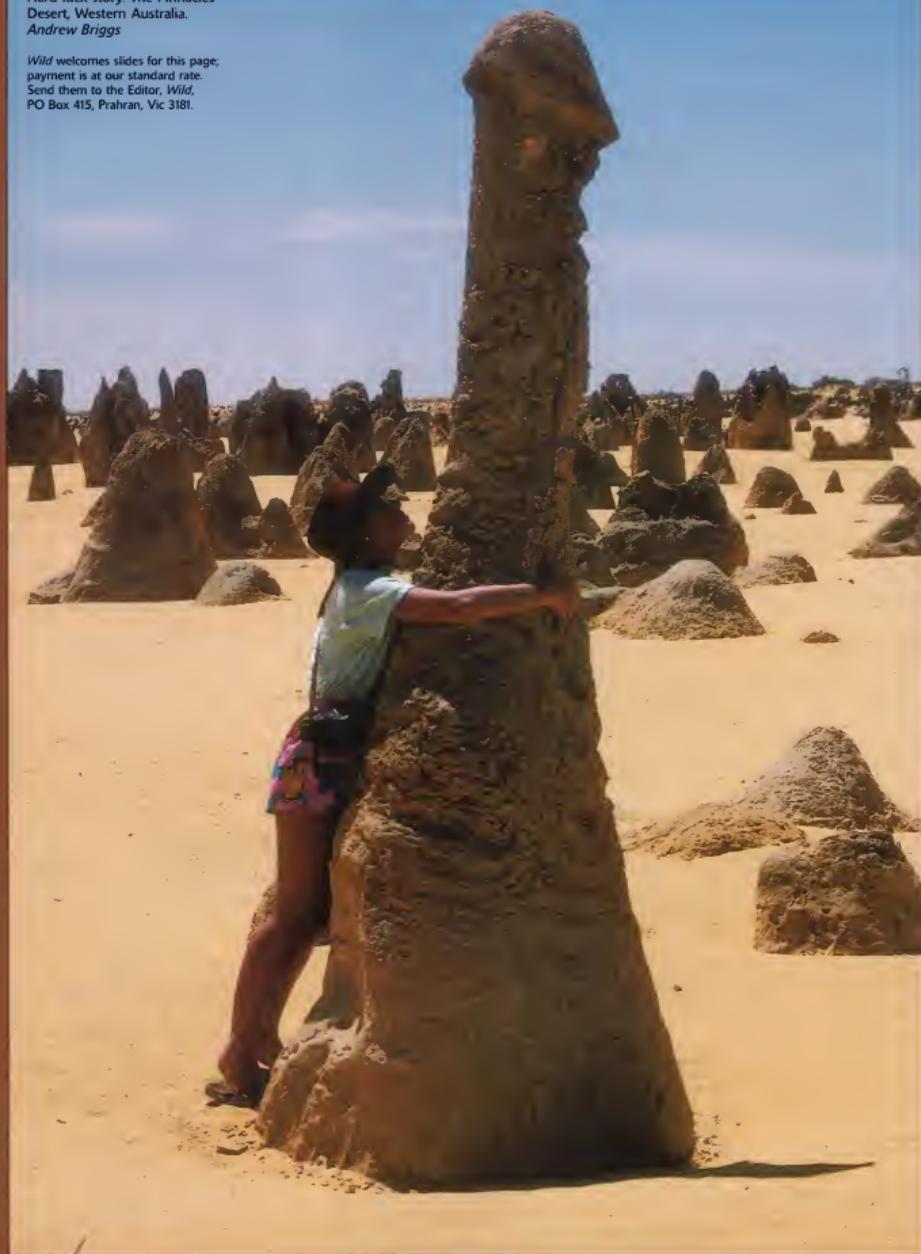
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Andrew Briggs

Wild welcomes slides for this page;
payment is at our standard rate.
Send them to the Editor, *Wild*,
PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181.



You keep pushing the limits; we're with you all the way.



you are the kind of individual who is
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Hood will fit over
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Our extensive range
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We were the first Australian
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Look Ma! No Hands!



DUO.

Two bulbs, O-ring seals.
4 x AA, Standard bulb, 12 hours.
OH bulb 3 hours.



ZOOM.

3 x AA, Standard bulb, 8 hours.
1 x 4.5V Duracell, OH bulb 6 hours,
Standard bulb, 17 hours.



SATO.

4 x AA, Standard bulb, 9 hours.
Can be used as head torch or hand torch.



MEGABELT.

3 x C, OH bulb 11 hours,
or 3 x AA, OH bulb 2 hours 45min.
Battery pack can be head or waist
mounted.



MICRO.

2 x AA, Standard bulb, 5 hours.



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